The WIDENING CIRCLE

THE MARCHIONESS TOWNSHEND

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THE
WIDENING CIRCLE

THE WIDENING CIRCLE

A CHRONICLE

BY

THE MARCHIONESS TOWNSHEND

Who looks upon a river in a meditative hour, and is not reminded of the flux of all things? Throw a stone in the stream and the circles that propagate are the beautiful types of all Influence.

EMERSON

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CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

The first home that I remember was a long, low white house, with a sloping lawn in front leading down to a stream — beyond the stream a meadow with twelve tall poplar trees, like soldiers stiff and standing to attention, at the far end. At sunset, silhouetted against the sky, they looked as if they were cut out of black velvet. At the back of the house there was an old-fashioned kitchen garden, a rick yard, and a duck pond. Between the rick yard and the garden, a road ran up into the woods. My sister and I called it "Adventure Lane." In this pleasant house lived my maternal grandfather and grandmother, and for the first few years of our lives we lived there with them. My sister was two years younger than I. We were inseparable — we played the same games, adored books, and made up splendid adventures, in which the duck pond was a wide ocean on which we sailed little ships of paper, and the rick yard with its golden hay and straw stacks, a land of rich treasure. We were never so happy as when we wandered in the woods, making

garlands of flowers, looking for elves and fairies, which we always hoped to catch a glimpse of in the lovely spring and summer, or in the winter when we sat together before the fire playing with our huge family of dolls.

Our grandparents were old-fashioned, they loved us dearly and cared for us tenderly, but they did not understand me very well. They thought I had queer ideas and uncanny ways — Margaret, fat, round and jolly, they understood better — but they made us very happy in their own prim way, and left us to play our games together. The village where they lived was sleepy and old-world, four miles from the station, and seven from the market town. The Vicar had a numerous family of boys and girls with whom we played many a romping game, but as I said to Margaret, " they play with their hands, but not with their minds." These and the little girls at the Hall, were the sole companions of our own age.

My mother was a tall, dark woman, with a very fine figure and wonderful complexion. She was the only child, and much spoilt when young, so that it was astonishing that she grew up to be as agreeable and amusing as she was. She had a passion for pretty clothes, a rather plaintive voice and reclined more often than sat, for she was a trifle lazy — the early morning life of the country was very distasteful to her, but hidden away beneath a rather

lazy manner, was an ambitious spirit. Her home life in its monotonous simplicity bored her, and she pined for a fuller life and social success. Then my father came to stay at the old-fashioned house. Robust, red of face, with a rather pompous manner and compelling personality, he made a great impression on her. He came from London town, the secret goal of her ambitions. He swept her away from the many suitors of the country, and realizing that her ambitions matched his own, he wooed and won her. The son of an iron master, who desired him to follow in his footsteps, he broke away, for he wished to be a barrister. All day he slaved in his father's office, but sat up most of the night studying law books. He won scholarships and went to Cambridge, ate his dinners, and in time attained his desire, and became a Member of the Bar, and it was when he had been practicing for about a year, that he fell in love with and married my mother.

Life was very bright and pleasant for the young people, and in due course I was born and later my sister, and when she was about six years old, my father began to speculate.

We of course knew nothing of all this, for our days were spent between the White House and the flat in London, Whitehall Court. Here we looked over the trees of St. James's Park and the famous Horse Guards, for the War Office of to-day had

not reared its majestic height to block the view — we walked in the Park every day with our governess, and on Thursdays, our mother's At Home Day, we went into the drawing-room to tea with her friends.

We sang little songs and danced little dances to amuse the guests, and when they had gone, we used to make for the cherry cake and pick out all the cherries. At this age, I was beginning to observe life and individuals, how people dressed, their manner of speech, whether their expression was happy, or unhappy, and many things began to interest and puzzle me. Amongst others, I noticed that my father and mother were not very happy. I sometimes found my mother crying, or looking defiant, and I heard my father's voice raised in anger or controversy — then there would be intervals — they would go to Paris together with parties of friends, or to gay Ostend, my mother smiling and cheerful with lots of pretty clothes, and my father quite kind to her. We had not many troubles, but we hated going to bed early, and always tried to put the clock back so that we might sit up late, and see our mother in her evening dress, diamonds glittering in her hair, and on her neck — her brocade cloak and rich dresses made us think of the princesses of fairy tales. About this time our grandmother died, and the holidays spent at the house of our pleasure in the country were over. We wept bitterly, for we saw

very little of green trees and flowers in London. Our holidays that year were spent at Brighton, which though a good place for grown-ups was a poor place for children, for as Margaret said, they had forgotten to clear away the pebbles — numbers of smartly dressed elders paraded up and down the lawns, fashionably attired, smattering all too much of London. Here on Sunday, starched and sashed, the elastic of our straw hats cutting our chins, we were marched off to church to sit squashed between a great many people while one man talked.

Our parents were a little erratic in their treatment of us, sometimes we were completely ignored, and did not see either of them from one week's end to another; and at other times we were taken out to theaters, and At Homes with older people, and so became very interested in the world, and though we played with our dolls at home we heard all sorts of things discussed, and even ventured to give our opinions to the elders on a variety of subjects. I used to write little stories, which I read to my sister, or told her when we were out for our monotonous walks in St. Jame's Park or the Embankment Gardens — life for a year or two was fairly quiet — the only variety was the procession of governesses, who one and all seemed to get married from our house. We had a great respect for one of these ladies who was a Primitive Methodist, and had

very narrow opinions of God and His restrictions to human beings. Margaret said, after one of her discourses, "I believe God is a very irritable old man with a long beard, who doesn't want anybody to laugh or play or sing," and we gathered that he loved instead long faces, long prayers, drab colors, and people who whispered. This lady was virtuous and conscientious according to her light, but she very nearly made us hate Christianity — luckily she married a man as holy as herself, and they went to live at Ealing, where once and once only we spent the day and night with her, and were so severely prayed about the following morning, on empty stomachs, because it was before breakfast that my sister cried bitterly and couldn't eat her porridge, and mother was a vision of delight when she came to take us back home. All this made me think a good deal about religion, and I wondered why, if God hated beautiful colors and happy noises of singing, He had made the sky so exquisitely blue and the birds to sing so sweetly; but the passing of the Primitive Methodist lady left us open to other influences — a very charming and cheerful governess now came to us. She took an interest in games, understood our belief in Santa Claus, walked with us in the Lowther Arcade, a heavenly place, now alas no longer existing, and at last persuaded mother to let her take us to an old farm house near the sea

in Hampshire for our annual holiday — and so one lovely day, we three left hot and dusty London, and after a journey of the greatest possible length, or so we felt, arrived at the enchanted spot. Here was a flower laden garden, a tiny lawn, a field of corn and poppies, and beyond, the sparkling, shimmering sea and miles and miles of stretching yellow sand.

Our new governess played the part of fairy godmother, and with a wave of her wand opened for us the gates of a magic kingdom.

We spent days of pure delight, running along the sands, paddling in the shining waves, watching the gulls dipping and swimming in the hot air, gathering huge bunches of scarlet poppies to decorate our little house, and growing day by day, stronger and browner, and fonder of our little governess, who with her fair hair blowing in the wind, her white blouse and short blue skirt, seemed the most delightful playmate in the world — she understood when we peeped out of our bedroom window on still nights, striving to see the mermaids sporting in the silver sea. She was quite in sympathy when we tiptoed up to each flower in the garden at sunset and tried to see the fairies just waking to life. And when we found the dark fairy rings in the grass on dewy mornings, she danced hand in hand with us round the circle, "just for luck" as we all said.

She never clipped the wings of our imagination, and from them beauty, light, color, and nature began to speak to me. I grew to be something of a mystic. I saw a spiritual symbol behind quite ordinary objects. Life began to mean something great and splendid, the door of my mind stood wide open, inviting in ideal visitants. I decried shapes and forms of beauty — my small sister was more practical, she used to tug at my dress when I stood watching the glowing sunset on the sands. "God has made the sky very beautiful," she would say, "but if we move further up the beach, we can see it just as well, and we shall not get our feet wet." In many ways she was different from me, just as full of fancy, and whimsical humor, but more boyish, more sensible, less fantastic in her imaginings — she made friends wherever she went, and had a smile for every one, she sang queer little snatches of song and trilled away like a bright bird from early morning till she was tucked up in bed. We always knew that she was ill if her little voice was still, and her tuneful carollings quiet. She was a pugilist too, and on one occasion at the age of eight, she had knocked a little boy's tooth out in a hand to hand struggle for the possession of some coveted treasure, and the boy with much gallantry had presented her with the tooth, not as a love token, but as a trophy of her prowess. Towards the end of our all too fleeting

holiday in this wonderful place, we had a great surprise. At breakfast one morning, our pretty governess uttered an exclamation of pleasure after reading a letter. "Children, your mother writes to say, your father has made a great deal of money and you are all going to be very well off." Her eyes danced as she imparted the thrilling news. "Listen, you are to move from Whitehall Court, and to go to a lovely house in Grosvenor Square."

"How will it be lovely," asked the practical Margaret, "will the seaside be in it, will the sand be in it, will there be beautiful, delicious waves to paddle about in?"

"Don't be a silly baby. The house will have rich furniture and fine pictures and huge airy rooms."

"But it will be London."

"Of course it will be London."

"And however large the rooms are, and however wide the windows are, we can only see London and houses when we look out?"

"Yes."

"Then I do not know why we should be as glad as glad."

"But, darling, listen, your mother writes 'the children's schoolroom and nursery are quite sweet with white walls, pale blue carpet, two little beds with blue silk curtains, held up by golden cupids, and they shall each have a pony to ride in the Park.'"

This was better, a pony was no mean gift, all story book children had ponies, and those cupids over the beds had possibilities.

"We can pretend they are our own fairies," said Margaret.

"I will call my cupid Ambrosia," I said.

"I will call mine George," she said, "it sounds safe to look after us at night and protect us from ghosts and goblins."

"Ambrosia is more romantic," I hazarded.

"George is more safer," she decided.

And George he was until the end of our luxurious life in Grosvenor Square.

The day of departure came and although we deeply regretted leaving the sea and freedom, there was a certain pleasure in going back to a new house with ponies and cupids of gold mixed in with it.

The house was all our governess had pictured from my mother's letter — there were marble pillars in the hall, a grand staircase, marvellous pictures and baskets of exquisite flowers in all the rooms. An enormous drawing room furnished in old gold brocade, a lift which made us feel very superior indeed, and a suite of rooms set apart for my mother all pink and gold. There were many bedrooms, and our nurseries and a schoolroom. It was all very grand and large and strange, and we felt we had strayed into a palace which did not be-

long to us. A new maid brought us our supper, and after we had explored the house, we got ready for bed. We had seen our golden cupids, Ambrosia and George, the soft blue carpet and the silken curtains and rejoiced in them all. The servants were new, we had a butler and two footmen, neat, solemn men, who made us think of the people who hand around the plate in church. Whilst we were undressing, our mother came rushing in, she kissed us and spoke excitedly about the great fortune my father had made, she said she was so happy, and was just going out to a big party — she had on a green chiffon dress with diamond shoulder straps, and a deep sapphire velvet cloak with white fur on it. We felt very glad she was our mother, and a good deal of the strangeness began to wear off.

"Are you glad to be back, darlings?" asked mother.

"Yes, but the country is nicer than London."

She laughed.

"But you lived in a tiny cottage."

"We had the sea and there seems to be more sky in the country."

"Fanciful darlings. Good-night, sleep well in your new little beds."

She kissed us and floated out, waving her hand as he went.

We had our hair brushed that night by the new

school-room maid. My sister was rather talkative to her. She was a thin, dark girl, with a white face, a solemn expression, and big black eyes.

"Are you always going to brush our hair?" said Margaret.

"Yes, Miss Margaret."

"Then we'd better come to an understanding. I like mine in four curls, not six, because they are lumpy to lie on, and not too tightly rolled, because I can't have my good hair broken."

"No, Miss Margaret."

"What's your name?"

"Kate, Miss."

"I don't like the name Kate," I joined in, "haven't you got another name."

"Yes, Miss, Katheleen is my real name."

"It would take too long to call you Katheleen, we'd better call you Kate."

"Yes, Miss."

She finished our hair, folded our things neatly, and departed, and when our dear Governess came in we told her how we missed her. But she said Kate was a nice quiet girl, and we'd better get used to some of the changes. She kissed us both and turning out the light, went out into the other room.

I felt restless and inclined to talk. It was easier to talk in the dark than in the light.

"I feel all mixed up," I said, "I miss the sound

of the sea and the smell of the seaweed; we used to smell it at night blowing in the window."

"There is a sound outside, a sort of roar."

"That's the noise of the carriages and buses," I said, listening.

"It's a little bit like the sea in the distance when it was rough," said Margaret.

"Let us pretend it is the sea, could you pretend it is?"

"I could, awfully easily," said she, "I like to, let's listen."

So we listened lying there in the big darkness, a thin line of light came in under the door, which led to the schoolroom and told us our little governess was still there. As we listened to the roar of the traffic, we fell asleep.

CHAPTER II

BEING RICH

The next morning we did some more exploring and made some discoveries. We found a room called the Oriental Room; never was there such a wonderful place. The walls were of red glass behind carved sandalwood, and behind the glass again electric light, so that when the light was turned on there was a soft crimson glow, dim and mysterious. The roof of this room was like a dome, and suspended from it were jeweled lamps. There were low divans with gorgeous embroidered cushions, and little carved tables smelling of cedar-wood The whole room had a queer Eastern scent. A house which contained such a room as this could no longer be anything but a cherished abode. We were proud to call it home. There were endless possibilities in this room for imaginative children. It was a mosque, a church, an Eastern palace, a Moorish prison, and Aladdin's cave. We talked of nothing else on our walk in Hyde Park that afternoon.

"But, my dear children, you will not have that room for your games," said Armie. We always called her Armie, though her name was Armstrong.

"We must," said Margaret, "grown-ups would never understand such a room."

"I hope we shall be allowed to go in often," I said, "it is the heart of the house. We shall never break anything in it, we shall treat it as gently as we would a new fluffy chicken."

"Well, we will see," said Armie.

And when we went down to dessert, I determined to ask about it. I sat on a chair near my father, and Margaret sat on his lap, turning her eye on him critically.

"You don't look any richer than you did, daddy," she said.

"But mother looks richer," I said, "her dress is very beautiful — and she looks — more" — "More as if she's got what she wants," broke in my father.

"I have," said mother, sipping her coffee.

"We want to know if we can, once a day, go into the Oriental room, daddy."

"Yes," said Margaret, "we think it the most beautifullest room in the world."

"It is an interesting room," said my father, "all the trappings came from Constantinople."

"Can we go there?" I asked anxiously.

"My chicks, it is so gloomy and dark I can't understand why you like it and the divans are on the floor so that if I get down I can't get up, and it smells as musty as a church; I don't like it."

"It looks as if you children can monopolize it, then," said my father.

"Oh! no, dad, we don't want to do that, we only want to go in it, not mopolize it."

They laughed, and from that day the Oriental room was ours. It became a part of us and our games, and we had a feeling of happiness if we only spent half an hour in its dim rosy walls.

The days passed happily. Armie gave us our lessons, we walked in the Park, we learnt to ride the ponies, we went out to tea with many youthful friends, who seemed to appear like magic, because we had become rich. They were always very impressed by the Oriental room. We played Pilgrim's Progress all over the house, and ended up there in the celestial city, which we named the room, after our weary wanderings over tables and chairs and up and down the long staircase.

Though we were happy and irresponsible, some vague influence seemed at work in the big house; our parents having got over the excitement of being rich, grew accustomed to entertaining in luxury and became again discontented with each other. One day I went into the morning room suddenly, and I saw my father and mother there with a very pretty girl. My mother's voice was caught with sobs, the girl looked flushed and defiant. My father said, "I shall leave you if I may not do as I like, and bring

what friends I like into my own house." My mother said, "It would almost be better than the sort of friends you bring."

Then they saw me and I was told to run away.

The next day I saw the butler packing up my father's things and taking them on a cab away from the house.

"Has my father gone away?" I asked mother.

And she said, "Yes, he has gone to Paris for a few weeks."

And she invited some women friends to stay and gave them a very pleasant time. She was always out driving and shopping and going to parties. The papers used to call her the pretty Mrs. Sutherland, and talk of her handsome dresses. Sometimes she took me out as well. One day when we were going to drive in the Park, the footman was tucking the rug 'round us, some lilies of the valley on her hat caught in the cockade on his hat. He was unable to move.

"That will do, Frederick," said my mother. "Go to the Park."

"Can't move, madame," said the embarrassed young man. "My 'at's caught in your 'at, if you will pardon the liberty."

We couldn't help laughing as we helped to disentangle the two hats.

Several friends, some of whom I shall always re-

member, came to the house. One was an old lady who had a tiny black toy terrier, which used to snap at our heels. She said, "Tiny is only playing, dear." But it hurt me, and whenever she came to tea I used to be terrified, for I knew that though she kissed me at one end, the dog would be biting me at the other.

My father came back from Paris, and bought mother a diamond necklace. She was very pleased with it and wore it at all the parties, for they now entertained very lavishly.

We saw mother less and less. She was always just off for somewhere. She swept in to kiss us good night sometimes, a radiant vision of satin and lace. She had attained her desire, at any rate, from a worldly point of view, for she was invited everywhere and was the center of attraction. Money was plentiful and friends innumerable. My father headed big public movements and spoke at many meetings. On Sunday he took us driving in Richmond Park in the spanking phaeton with its pair of goodly chestnuts. We had tea at the Star and Garter Hotel and walked down the hill afterwards under the trees. We ate a good many cakes at tea time, and loved to see the view from the Terrace of the hotel. The trees looked purple, the pink sky was reflected in the winding river and the whole valley grew soft and misty like a crayon drawing. It was so peaceful and gentle with the Sunday even-

ing bells chiming out of the mist, that I did not want to go home.

Sometimes our delightful godfather, a Colonel in the Tenth Hussars, went with us. He often came to see us, and brought us presents, and generally lunched with us on Sundays. He used to peel us fruit and crack nuts for us, and after lunch he pretended to be an ogre, and crept round the table after us saying, "Fe-fo-fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman." And we fled in terror before him. Then he would smile and say, "No more ogres, only a nice kind godfather." And we flew into his arms, much relieved.

Another personality I remember, was an elegant old lady, who had been at the Court of Russia, and whose husband was a great favorite of the Czar. She had a face like white ivory, her hands were exquisite, her hair was silvery gray and she always wore a black lace cap with a long lace veil behind, which hid a plait of silver hair as thick as a man's wrist. She could not do her hair up, it was too long, so wore it down concealed in this veil.

Whenever she came she stayed hours and hours, and when my mother was obliged to leave her and go out to fulfill an engagement, she would not be daunted. "I will join the children in the schoolroom and try to amuse them."

She did join us but she didn't amuse us, for she

repeated the same anecdotes and stories to us until we knew them by heart. At last one day Margaret could bear it no longer. We both decided to stop it, and when she said, "I don't think I've told you little girls this story before," we said both together, standing in front of her, our hands behind us, "Yes, thank you, you have told us that story before, heaps of times, and as we have our lessons to do, we are afraid we must wish you good evening."

For which act we were severely scolded by Armie.

But nevertheless it put a stop to it.

Things began to be a little strange at this time. We were not told of any loss of money, but one or two of the servants were dismissed and the others had to do more work. For instance, Kate became the housemaid as well as the nurserymaid. We had grown very fond of her, and often when Armie went to spend the day out, Kate sat with us while we played with our dolls. She used to sew and talk of her home in the country, not as if she liked it, but as of something she was well out of.

"You don't like the country," I said to her wondering how she could dislike it.

She shook her head. "No, it's dull, people don't half live, the lights are out early, and you all go to bed, there's no traffic and noise."

"That's nice," said Margaret, "there's only bird noises and trees sighing in the wind."

"Lot too much sighing in the country," she said; "people get like turnips."

"You are not like a turnip," said Margaret, looking at her critically.

"I left home when I was young," said Kate, "or I should have been."

It seemed very strange the country could appear so different to people. We only saw the sun-flecked meadow-lands and heard the singing birds, and thought it a wonderful and peaceful place. Kate found it a place of stagnation and preferred the noise of the traffic, and the glare of the street lamps after dark, and being an enterprising young person, she packed up her boxes and set out to make her living in the environment which most appealed to her. She had quite won Margaret's heart by the great care she had taken of her hair, which was fair and silky but neither long nor thick; under Kate's careful hand, it began to be both. I used to watch them at night. Kate handled the hair most tenderly, taking a small comb, parting it and brushing the separate strands with even strokes, then rolling it up in soft silk instead of screwing it into harsh paper.

Our mother grew very melancholy as the days passed. She went out a great deal, but my father was not with her much. He went away very often, and when he was at home, was not very amiable to any of us.

"Being rich has not made mother very happy," I said to Armie one day.

And Armie said, "Money does not buy happiness."

I said, "Do people always make each other unhappy when they are married?"

"No, very seldom."

"Would you like to be married, Armie?"

"I shall be one day."

"I don't want to be married, and I never will be," I announced.

"Neither will I," said Margaret, "because there seems to be something cross about being married."

I was about twelve, and very fond of reading. I devoured all sorts of literature, fairy tales and autobiographies, even Horner's Penny Stories, which Kate liked very much and read aloud to us sometimes on Sunday evenings. We found the people in them rather too holy, and like the governess who went to live at Ealing. The little girls were always reading the Bible and dying, and the older ladies giving up pretty dresses and going out as missionaries to tell the heathen people about God, which I thought a waste of time. Margaret used to talk about it with me. We thought we would ask Kate.

"Haven't they got a God out there where the Missionaries go?" said Margaret.

"Yes," said Kate, "some sort of God, I suppose."

"Out in China, Japan and Timbuctoo, I suppose," said Margaret.

"And the Cannibal Islands," I said. "I know they went there."

"Isn't the Chinese and Cannibal Island's God as nice as ours?" I asked.

"Lord, no," said Kate, "just a graven image, and a hidjus one at that."

"Don't they know about ours, out there?"

"Some do and some don't."

"Why should their God be awful and ours good? Does ours only like English people?"

"You do harp, Miss Margaret, I will say," said Kate.

"But," I persisted, "have you seen ours?"

"No," said she shocked, "'course not, in these days, all that was long ago."

"Has anyone seen the God of the Chinese and heathens?"

"Dear me, Miss, I don't suppose so."

"Then how do we know that ours is the best one?"

"I think I'll be getting the tea," said Kate.

Both Margaret and I agreed that we had won and she was foiled.

I saved up my money at this time, and bought a statue of Our Lord with a benevolent face and kind hands outstretched, and at the same time, a

statue of Buddha in imitation bronze, and I put them side by side on a shelf in the schoolroom and pondered on their different merits, preferring the beautiful Christ, but anxious to be fair to Buddha.

We had been in our luxurious house for nearly four years when the smash came. It was like the bursting of a dark cloud. We did not know what had happened, only that one day Armie swept us into her arms, and said she would have to leave us, and we all cried bitterly together. Our mother, too, was deeply grieved at the parting, but as we were going abroad and Armie was engaged to be married, she could not go with us. There was not much time for repining, for about a week after Armie's departure we were astonished to find Kate busy packing our boxes, and telling us to take the dolls and toys that we wanted, for we were going away. We saw mother going swiftly about the house, or heard that she was talking business in the morning room. The servants looked harried and some of them left. Kate became very important and told us she was going abroad with us to look after us. We were very glad of this, because if we had to go abroad, we knew that Kate would make it seem less strange.

The day of departure came. It was all so hurried, we had no time to be sad. Mother, Margaret, Kate and I were on our way in the train to Dover

before we realized what had happened. The sea journey was a new adventure. We were greatly interested at seeing all the French porters and fisherwomen at Calais. There was a great noise of porters shouting loudly, the women on the station sold funny little dolls in Boulogne caps, the crowd hurried to and fro, the noise of the trains steaming in and out of the station, and the sirens on the ships hooting and screaming, gave us a feeling of smallness we had never felt before.

We landed safely in the Paris train at last, climbing the high steps with an effort, and had a delicious lunch in the Restaurant Car.

Mother looked tired and pale and spoke a good deal in a low voice to Kate, who nodded and murmered soothingly. Arriving in Paris, we drove at once to a large hotel, where numbers of people were passing in and out speaking in French and gesticulating, or sitting at little tables, sipping their coffee, and regarding newcomers with idle curiosity.

Our rooms faced the Tuilleries Gardens, and we went out on to the little balcony and saw the twinkling lights far below and the traffic streaming along the Rue de Rivoli. We jumped on the bed and peeped in the cupboards; all was new and fraught with interest; in fact it was "abroad."

We didn't have much hair brushing that night, but tumbled into bed tired out with the journey.

The next day was fine. Mother looked much brighter, and said she would take us to drive in a cab in the Bois de Boulogne. The cab was small and ricketty. The man made funny noises to the horse, and cracked his wip and flew round the corners so quickly that we thought we should fall out. The Bois was crowded with cabs and carriages, and on the footpath walked the little French boys and girls — they looked quite different from English ones; the little girls wore plaid or blue and white check frocks and stiff sailor hats, and the boys, quite big ones, wore short knickerbockers and socks. We thought this funny and laughed at them. There were gendarmes and soldiers, and nurses with colored cloaks and white caps, with wonderful long ribbon streamers, carrying or wheeling tiny babies. There were kiosks, where papers were sold, and small wooden houses where a man in a striped coat made "gauffres" on a little stove, fresh for each newcomer. There were balloon women, whose floating colored air balloons looked like monster bunches of grapes. It was absorbing in the extreme, and we took it all in as we drove along in the ricketty little cab on that sunny morning.

"Are we going to live in Paris, mamma?" asked Margaret.

"No, darling, we are going on to Wiesbaden, where I have some friends."

"Is it far?"

"We shall get half way in the evening, that is, as far as Cologne."

"Is that where Eau de Cologne grows?"

"That is where it is made."

"It must smell nice, that place."

We had luncheon at twelve o'clock, and afterwards Kate took us for a walk to see the shops. We saw a lot of steps leading up to a big church. It was the Madeline. We went in, it was vast and dark and very lofty. It smelt of some scent, like the Oriental room. People were kneeling in the pews, or passing softly up the aisles, candles gleamed out of the darkest corners, and statues of saints looked down on us very kindly. It was our first visit to a Roman Catholic church and impressed me ominously.

"Isn't it dim and smelly?" I whispered to Margaret.

"It makes my nose tickle," said Margaret, "and the people look awfully solemn."

"Is it the same god as ours?" I whispered to Kate, who was looking about with interest.

"Yes, Miss, I think so, only a different way of arranging things."

"It's nicer than St. Gile's at home which smells of varnish and prayer books. It's more as if there was a real person in it."

Then Kate took us home, because we had to go to

bed early, and we went down the steps of the Madeline reluctantly.

"I must have my hair brushed to-night," said Margaret, "it looked quite dull this morning."

Mother had met some friends and was dining with them. We were always glad to see her looking cheerful, because as Margaret said, "she hasn't got a husband here to comfort her, and he wouldn't comfort her if he was here."

The journey to Cologne was very tedious, indeed, and we were so tired when we arrived we went to sleep in the bus. . . .

The next day we visited the famous Cathedral and walked on the cobble stones. The carts made a great noise clattering over these stones.

We had lunch at a small café overlooking the Rhine, and afterwards ate a great many mulberries from one of the trees, and made our lips and teeth dark blue, to the horror of mother and Kate. The following morning we started for Wiesbaden.

CHAPTER III

LIFE IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

Wiesbaden was a place quite after our own hearts, for it had many avenues of trees, pleasure gardens and beautiful surrounding country. We had taken rooms at a very nice family hotel overlooking the Kursaal Gardens. There were charming walks and drives into the country. While Kate unpacked, we flitted from room to room rearranging the furniture, which was stiff and hard, and pulling the two small beds together so that we could talk at night.

In one corner was a large heating stove, made of blue and white glazed tiles, instead of a fireplace, and when we had got out our family of dolls and other toys, our paint boxes and story books, we began to feel quite at home.

Mother's room and sitting room comprised the little suite, and Kate had a room opposite. German meals were arranged differently from ours, an enormous, substantial middleday dinner, coffee at 4.30, and a sort of high tea at 7 o'clock.

Mother was much displeased at what she termed such "a suburban mode of living," but as she had some nice introductions and knew several people in

the hotel, she made her own little circle and went very often to the Kursaal concerts, the Opera and dinner parties.

When we had been there about a month, she decided we must no longer remain idle, and inquired for a good school, and having heard of a nice convent, where the nuns took day pupils, and where they gave an excellent training at a very moderate price, she made arrangements for us to go there.

It was bitterly cold the day we started school, and I remember Kate took us on the first morning. We ran hard to try and get warm, but at the corners the wind was piercing and went through us like a knife. The dry leaves ran along in front of us, or swirled in whirlpools round our feet. At last we arrived at a little square, on one side of which, through wrought iron gates, stood a large white house. On the gate was written on a brass plate, "CONVENT" with a black cross on the top. We opened the gate and went up a paved path to the door. Kate rang the bell and it clanged somewhere a long way inside, and presently the door was opened by a rosy-faced nun. She wore a black dress, white collar and gauffred cap with long black veil. She opened the door with both hands and smiled at us.

She said, "Bitte," which is "please" in German. Margaret answered, "Yes, isn't it."

Kate went, saying she would return at 4.30, and

left us in charge of the chubby nun who walked up three steps and beckoned us to follow her. Her rosary clicked as she walked, and her veil floated a little. She opened a door and ushered us into a large plain room, where she left us. The walls were dark green and on one there was a picture of the Pope in brownish color; a long table was in the middle of the room, with a fern on it in a blue pot. It was covered with shiny black stuff instead of a cloth, and books were arranged here and there in little piles of three. On a bracket opposite the picture of the Pope, was a small statue of the Madonna, with a blue lamp burning in front of it, and brass vases of autumn leaves on either side. Through folding doors at the side of the room came the sound of murmuring voices.

"I'm afraid Heaven will be extremely like this," said Margaret.

"It's like getting into another sort of world," I said, "but I like it; that is a statue of the Virgin Mary with the light burning in front."

"Is it?" said Margaret, "she's very pretty, I thought at first it was one of the nuns."

The door opened and a tall nun came in. She had large, dark eyes and a pale face. Her smile was very gentle. She spoke English to us, and said we were going to be in her class, and that she hoped we would become fond of the convent and soon

learn a great deal. We assured her we would.

She then took us into the chapel through the folding doors; red lamps blinked near the altar, and there was a smell of warm wax candles and incense. Several nuns knealt, saying their rosary, and our nun knelt too. She made the sign of the Cross over us as she led us out. And all this time the others were saying their rosary in a soft monotone.

Life at the convent was very happy and full of work. We had lunch there and walked afterwards in the school crocodile. At four o'clock coffee and rolls were given. Sometimes we stayed for this, but often we went home and Kate made us our tea in the English fashion.

We learned soon after that my father had lost all his money, and we now had to live on my mother's small income, but we had many pleasant times in spite of financial misfortune. Sometimes we went by train to the Rhine and saw the old Palace at Biebrich, and ate our cakes and coffee looking out over the shining river, or else we took the road to the woods, up towards the Russian Chapel, which had real gold cupolas and lovely paintings inside. Here we would roam for hours with Kate, the pine trees long slender and pink, stretched in unending regiments into the distance, and through a gap in the trees, could be seen a splendid view of distant country. It was a never ending joy to us to wander

here. Sometimes the trees looked like the long aisles of a vast cathedral, the red of the fallen leaves like a carpet of state, and when the sun was red, it shone at the end of the misty aisles, like a red lamp burning on the altar, while the blue smoke, rising up out of the valley from the woodmen's cottages, seemed like incense as it curled against the sunset. These beautiful glimpses of nature gave me infinite delight, and just as people see forms and shapes in the red embers of a fire, I saw them in the woods.

Life in the convent was also full of interest. The nuns with their soft movements and sable draperies seemed to me like shadows of people.

When the door of the convent closed behind us each morning I felt as if a veil fell, and I was in another world. A world of saintly beings; their movements were quiet, unlike the hurried pedestrians in the streets, their footfall noiseless. They were always busy teaching, walking with the pupils, or praying in the chapel. Quite small things pleased them. A little bird in a cage presented by one of the children for the classroom, a holy picture, a birthday of one of the boarders, they became quite excited and smiled and nodded like children and whispered to each other about these trifles as if they were important events. There heads were nearly always bent as they walked, their voices were

soft, their hands hidden in their long sleeves, or fingering their black and gold beads. Sometimes they paced sedately in the small garden, their dark robes rustling over the dry leaves, in twos and threes, conversing in sober tones. I watched them from the window of the classroom with awe and admiration; their lives so remote from the outside world seemed to me sad and pathetic. As a secret sorrow lies hidden in the heart of a worldling, their lives were hidden in the heart of the world.

Margaret was very popular and made numerous friends and we soon began to speak German quite well.

The tall, pale nun with dark eyes, Sister Eleanora, in whose class we were, was my special friend. I often used to ask her if I might walk with her, when she took the school out. I looked upon her with profound respect. I had never met anyone like her.

"Are you sad about anything?" I once asked her after studying her face.

"No, my child, not sad."

"Your face looks always as if you were thinking of mournful things."

"I am thinking, on the contrary, of very beautiful things."

"Of angels?'

"Yes. Of angels."

"Do you see them like that nun in the picture on the wall of the chapel?"

"I am not worthy to see them, my child."

"If you are not worthy, nobody in the world is."

"Perhaps I shall see them soon."

"What do you mean?"

"I am not very strong, and it will please Our Lord to take me to himself sooner than the others."

She became for me from that moment, almost sacred. I obeyed her every wish, and often brought her pots of flowers. She thanked me and was pleased, but could not keep them for herself, as she might not possess anything. It was the first time death had come near to me, and I saw this sweet creature so resigned, so un-afraid, that I was not at all horrified, only deeply impressed, and filled with the thought that if she feared nothing, I also need have no fear. It was the most gentle introduction to the inevitable end of man, and no hand could have pointed more tenderly to something which might otherwise have seemed terrible to an imaginative child. . . .

One of the introductions which my mother had was to a very charming old lady, a certain Princess. She invited her to bring us to tea. We were dressed in our prettiest dresses and taken to the fine old house, and received by the Princess' lady in waiting, and presently the Princess herself came in. She was

dressed in stiff brown silk, with a thick gold chain and locket, and gold ear-rings quite four inches long. We made our curtsies, and she then told us to come in to tea. We had a very plain tea with rolls and dry sweet rusks. We felt uncomfortable and prim, and after tea the Princess showed us some pictures, and a very curious small iron tree, on which were hung iron rings, and bracelets, and brooches, and she told us that in the Franco-Prussian War, the German women had given their jewels to the country, and received in return an iron reproduction of whatever they had sacrificed. We were impressed and Margaret said, "I've got a tin ring at home out of a cracker," which seemed rather silly we thought on talking it over afterwards.

At parting the Princess gave us each a little red leather Bible and kissed us and said we must come again soon.

"I think she's a missionary trying to convert us," said Margaret, as we were driving back to the hotel.

"Why, darling?" said mother, who had been bored to death and was yawning.

"She gave us Bibles, just as if we were heathens."

"Perhaps that's because she is related to the Emperor," I said. "I believe Royalties have to be awfully religious."

"What a dress," said mother, who always noticed

people's clothes. "She must have seen the model in a fashion paper fifty years ago."

"I like nuns better than Princesses," I said to Margaret in bed that night.

"There's not much to choose between them," said Margaret sleepily, "both are religious, only in different ways, and both seem unalive somehow."

. . . . . .

I remembered with great clearness how I felt when eating one of those dry rusks at tea. I was terrified of drowning conversation when crunching it, and afraid when I bit it, a chip would fly off and hit the Princess, and I felt the quotation was wrong, and it ought to be "uneasy lies the head that goes to tea with Princesses."

. . . . . .

Christmas was a very great festival in these parts, even the poorest house had a little Christmas tree, and kept the time with feasting and rejoicing. The shops were gay with glittering tinseled dolls and red-hooded Santa Claus, and every kind of shining trifle, to hang upon the tree — the spirit of Christmas reigned even in the convent. The nuns were full of suppressed excitement, and hid funny parcels in their long sleeves, and smiled quite slyly, and pursed up their lips mysteriously, whenever the small boarders became too inquisitive.

The Chapel was thoroughly cleaned and every

lamp and candlestick polished until it shone again. Myriads of candles appeared on the little altar. Pots of beautiful flowers from devout parents arrived for the Christmas Eve service.

We stayed late at Sister Eleanora's request, to receive gifts from the other children and to attend the little service. There was a tiny Bethlehem where lay a waxen figure of the infant Christ, the Madonna bending over Him and St. Joseph kneeling, with the three kings, offering gifts. Surrounded with holly and flowers a dim red lamp burning overhead, it almost seemed as if the figures moved slightly, in the scented, shadowy dusk — nuns and children sang fervently in Latin "Adeste Fidelis," and we joined in English as fervently as the best of Catholics. The words were different, but the spirit was the same. After the service the nuns wished us a happy Christmas, and we walked back with Kate, muffled in woolen scarfs and serge coats, along the snowy crowded streets, which shone like Christmas cards in the bright light of the moon.

When we got back to the hotel, Margaret turned and looked up. "Many happy returns of the day," she said, "and many of them."

"What are you doing?" said Kate. "Come in out of the cold."

"Just wishing God many happy returns," said Margaret. "I think it's only polite."

She was quite right, she never left anyone out —

"Many happy returns of the day, Lord," I said, as we ran quickly after Kate into the warm hotel.

We sat up very late, as there was a dance at the hotel, and we were allowed to watch the dancers. When at twelve o'clock we went to bed, we noticed that Kate had a pink bow on her hair, and she said she had just been given a box of chocolates by a nice young man.

"Very well spoken, though a foreigner," she said. "Have some chocolates."

We were very glad that Kate had a young man, as we munched almond chocolates with crystallized violets on the top.

"Young men like girls," said Margaret; "I saw one kiss a girl in a blue dress to-night; they were standing behind a black satin screen with gold storks on it."

"They like them awfully when they are trying to get them to marry them, but not after," I said. I remembered mother and father.

"When I grow up, I shall pretend I'm going to marry one, get as many chocolates and flowers as I can, then I shall say when he asks me, no thank you, my father and mother were married, so I know what it is. Good morning."

"It would be a sort of revenge," said Margaret thoughtfully, "but he was a very nice young man

who kissed the girl, and her face looked as if the sun was shining on it."

"It was the lamp," I said.

"There wasn't a lamp," said Margaret.

When the spring came and the snow melted, everything looked changed. The streets became avenues of feathery trees, the Kursaal Gardens were covered with flowers, and we went for long walks with the school. On each side of the road, the fruit trees were covered with pink and white blossoms; the white looked like snow. The sky was blue with big white fleecy clouds, and often larks were singing high up somewhere. The children broke rank when we got out of town, and Sister Marie and Sister Eleanora sat on a seat near an open grass covered common, while the children ran about, picking daisies, or chasing each other, their hats off, their long hair flying behind them as they ran. Margaret ran with the others and sometimes I did, but more often I stayed with Sister Eleanora. She sat so still on the green seat, the breeze just stirring her veil, her eyes looking up into the blue sky, or gazing away into the distance.

"Never forget how you may be consoled by the beauty of nature," she said one day. "Nature is the great healer."

"Why, Sister Eleanora?"

"Because she is so silent, she is not critical, she

is always beautiful — and have you not noticed the noises of nature are soothing?"

"I know, like waterfalls and waves whispering, and bees humming?" I asked

She nodded and patted my hand.

"And leaves rustling, and birds chirping and herds lowing in the fields, I see you understand, I thought you would. I came into the schoolroom one day in the winter, and saw you absorbed in the sunset."

"The room was red with it," I said. "It lit up the edges of the desks, and the statue of St. Michael in the garden, the branches of the trees, the old fountain, all of them were outlined with glory."

Sister Eleanora smiled.

"The spell is on you," she said. "Nature is the servant of God. If you love her, everything living, every animal, every blade of grass will be in sympathetic touch with you."

"I wish I were more like you," I said impulsively, "just like you; I want to be a nun, and live in a peaceful place, and meet good people, and have thoughts like yours."

"Your thoughts can always live in a peaceful place, you can take them like a flock of sheep, into green pastures, beside still waters — you can guard your thought sheep from the wolves of worldliness," she said gently.

"But the hotel is not peaceful," I said, "there are distracting noises, bells ringing, crowds of people talking, page boys running about."

"Those are outside," said she, "there must be those kind of noises in the world. You must shut your ears to those and hear the inner sounds."

"Inner sounds?"

"In the midst of battle, you will remember, Joan of Arc heard the voices of the Saints, and the melodies of Heaven. Listen to the inner sounds, my child, and all the other noises will fade away."

"Better be returning, Sister," broke in Sister Marie, who had been walking up and down reading her breviary.

Sister Eleanora rose and clapped her hands, and the children came hurrying to her, putting on their hats and smoothing their dresses, before they formed into twos.

"Thank you, Sister Eleanora," I said as we walked back, "I will remember." And always after this I called by thoughts my flock, and when I was troubled later in life, I tried to lead them into the silent pasture lands of memory, and often saw my saintly Sister Eleanora, sitting on the green seat in her black habit, her face pale and tender, her thin white hands folded in her lap, the trees and sky making a background of beauty for her, and words of heavenly wisdom falling from her lips. Here,

then, was a second thought — a path leading up to gardens of reverie.

Some time back she had spoken of Death, now she spoke of Nature. She was a fine musician, it was wonderful when she played the organ in the convent chapel. The organ in the church at home seemed quite different — A fat man sat on the stool, and his neck looked very red next to the white surplice, and he never played long pieces alone like she did — It was a special treat to listen to her — A stained glass window at the end of the chapel showed its colors when the sun was low, and they were reflected on to her black veil and robe, so that she seemed to be clothed in soft crimson and blue, like the Madonna in the pictures.

Sometimes the music was like angels singing far up in the roof, sometimes like the rumbling of a storm, and great waves surging on a desolate shore. One delicate flute-like note seemed like the pipe of a wandering shepherd in an autumn wood, and when we sat together in the dim sanctuary, she carried with her the Peace of God.

I persuaded mother to take us to the opera. There was music of another kind, romantic music, love music, music which created a sense of gardens of red roses, and two people, their arms entwined, walking in the garden. This perhaps was the meaning of love, and those two happy people looking at

each other so kindly, brought tender ideas into my mind. When I told Margaret about it she said, "I told you when the man kissed the girl, she looked very pretty and glad."

"They were in love perhaps," I suggested.

"Of course they were," said Margaret. "I believe it's a very beautiful thing."

That was what it all meant, that stirring music; and I understood better the meaning of the sentence "inner sounds," for though I did not often go to the opera, I still heard in my mind, with exquisite delight, the melodies and soft cadences. Music went deep into my soul, and opened the gates of the flesh, giving a free glimpse of the eternal. How wonderful life was — there were so many doors one could open and peep in — People, personalities absorbed me — I wondered how they lived, if they were happy or discontented, if they gathered from the resources of nature as much pleasure as I did. If the pretty girls were in love with some splendid young man, like the girl in the opera. If old people wrinkled and decrepit were as unafraid of death as my gentle nun — If music spoke to those ladies who sat upright on stiff chairs, looking critically over their glasses at the world in general, as it did to me.

There was one of these at the hotel, her hair was dreadfully neat, her hands were always engaged with sharp steely knitting needles, but they were not

so sharp and steely as her eyes and her tongue — I spoke to her one day. "Do you hear the inner sounds," I said, "or only the hotel noises?"

"What are the inner sounds?" she asked.

"I know what they are, but I can't explain very well. Like Joan of Arc heard, voices —"

"Voices, what kind of voices, you queer girl?"

"Voices that make you feel happy and very radiant about nothing in particular, thoughts when you go out on a spring morning, or hear a wonderful voice singing," I tried to explain.

"I think your mother makes you too imaginative," said the prim lady.

And I knew she was as different from Sister Eleanora as a cold rainy day is to a mellow summer evening.

A man fell in love with mother at this time, he was a tall man, his hands were nice, his face was very kind. He used to give us boxes of sweets and take mother for drives and walks, and we often went as well. She looked happy, and it was nice to see her so. He helped her out of the carriage very carefully, as if she were very precious. I learned after that he wanted to marry her, and thought she was a widow. She was very sad one day and told me she would not see him any more because she was married. I became very indignant.

"He is a good, careful man," I said, "he's never

cross with you like father was. He looks at you with his eyes very softly. Why should you be unkind to him?"

"It is not right for a married lady to allow men to look at her softly," said mother.

"Father looks at other people, he likes them better than you, I remember things," I said.

"Hush, do not speak like that, you do not understand."

"I do wish you would let me tell you some things," I said.

"We will not speak of it any more."

"I don't want that nice man to be hurt," I said, "if you never see him again, you will be unhappy, he will be unhappy, I shall be unhappy. Three people will be unhappy, if you do that. My father will not be unhappy, whichever you do. He hasn't sent you any money for a long time."

Mother shook her head.

"I'm afraid he has no money to send."

A week after this, the man who loved mother thanked me for being his friend, but told me I had not done much good, because mother was going away. And soon after, I learned we were leaving for London, as my father had sent us enough money to do so and she thought we ought to go back and go to school in our own country.

We were sorry to leave. We said good-bye to

the nuns. I cried when Sister Eleanora kissed me, I knew I should not see her again, and she knew it, too.

"We shall meet again though, my little girl," she said, "but it will be in a different place, and perhaps not for a very long time."

"It is the different place that makes me feel so queer," I said.

"It will be a more beautiful place than this," she said softly.

"But this is sure, one can touch things here, and it is not so far off, and like a dream."

"Do not cry." She led me gently to the door, where Kate was waiting with Margaret. I threw my arms around her and then followed the others.

When I looked back, she was still standing in the doorway. The sun was shining on her face, she nodded and smiled. The doves which belonged to the convent had just been fed. As she stood there they flew up like a white cloud all around her, and hid her from me.

. . . . . .

The man came to see us off and brought mother baskets of flowers and fruit. I heard him say, "You will not change your mind and stay here?"

And she answered, "My duty is to my husband and my little girls."

He kissed us both and he kissed mother's hand.

The train began to move slowly. He took off his hat and stood looking at her, looking and looking, until he was lost in the distance.

Mother sat down in a corner, holding the bunch of red roses he had given her. A tear fell on one of them like a drop of dew.

CHAPTER IV

LONDON AGAIN

We arrived in London, it was getting dark, there was a fog — the lamps had halos 'round them, the traffic looked misty and phantom-like in the haze, there was a noise of cab whistles and crowds of people hurried along the dim streets. They all seemed very busy, and most of them looked poor.

When we stopped at 183 Gloucester Place, a shabby man opened the cab door for us. His face was very thin, he had a beard growing, he looked very cold. He helped to take down our boxes. Kate rang the front door bell. A stout woman opened the door. She was the landlady. A new experience, and as we later discovered, rather an unpleasant one. She had a severe face, and wore a gray silk blouse and black alpaca skirt.

Mother said, "Here we are, Mrs. Jones. I hope you have nice fires for us as we are very cold."

And the woman said, "I done my best to have everything comfortable, Madam."

We had a dining-room downstairs. But the drawing-room and all the other rooms were on the top floor.

When we had washed our faces and brushed our hair, we went down to supper with mother.

The room was furnished with dark red chairs, with a couch to match. The wallpaper was drab with green leaves and dull red flowers all over it. There were large dark blue vases on the mantelpiece, and a big gloomy sideboard, with a glass at the back, which made you look as if you wanted your face washed — A fire was burning, but it hadn't been lighted long, for the room was very smoky, and little puffs coming out of the chimney every time the door was opened. The maid who waited on us hurried in and out very quickly, and we could hear other bells ringing. She had lots of people to wait on.

"So this is Apartments?" I observed.

"I'm afraid I'm not going to like it a bit," said Margaret.

"Nor am I," said mother, "but we must all try as we have to live here for the present."

"Will the fire always smoke? I'd almost rather not have a fire if it's going on like that."

"It's nearly as foggy inside as it is out," I said.

"That's only because the chimney's damp," said mother; "It will be all right to-morrow. Now you had better go to bed; send Kate down and I will give her some supper."

We climbed up the dingy stairs — on the landing there was a gas jet with a fluted pink glass globe

on it. The gas was turned on too much, so that the flame appeared above the globe, and it made a sort of singing noise. We stood looking at it.

"Do you think it's safe?" I said.

"I don't know," said Margaret, "but it's rather a nice noise, like a kettle singing."

"If it isn't safe the house will burn down."

"It's not at all a pretty house, I don't think it would matter," said Margaret. I rather agreed with her.

And we went on upstairs.

Kate had unpacked our night things. Our bedroom fire did not smoke, but looked very red and cosy. We were used to sleeping in new places, and there was always the splendid to-morrow.

"It's a funny house," I said to Kate when she was leaving us for the night.

She sniffed. "We've been in worse places," she said. "It's London that's good enough for me."

She closed the door, and I heard her shoes squeaking away down the passage.

A door shut in the distance. The house became quiet. It was like shutting the door of the day and putting it away in the cupboard of the past.

"To-day is gone," I said in a mournful way.

"But to-morrow's coming next," said Margaret's sleepy voice, "and to-morrows are almost always interesting in a new place."

I lay quiet. Outside it was very still, just a jingle of a bell on a hansom, and the clop-clop of the horses' hoofs.

I meant to stay awake and think about a lot of things but I didn't.

. . . . . .

School life in the big high school near Baker Street was a different affair to the peaceful convent of Wiesbaden. All sorts of girls went to this school. The daughters of soldiers, sailors, tinkers and tailors, publicans, bankers, peers, a motley mixture of types, samples of those to be met with later in life. Here snobs abounded, though their hair was in pig tails and their skirts just to their knees.

"What is being smart?" Margaret asked mother, after a difficult day at school, where we had been the objects of much criticism on account of our not wearing collars like the other girls.

"It depends," said mother, "sometimes it means you are tricky and cheat people, sometimes it means you put your clothes on properly, it might mean you are pert—"

"No, not that, dresses," said Margaret.

"Oh, my dears, I don't know how to explain—"

"I'll tell you," said I, "we are *not*."

"Anyhow that's what some of the girls said to us to-day."

"They are very silly," said mother.

"I think," said the practical Margaret, "it's better to be dressed like the people you live with, or mix with, then there couldn't be any feelings — Look at the nuns, they couldn't possibly make each other unhappy by talking like the girls talked to-day."

"Take no notice," advised mother, "just go about your work and do not let them think they have upset you; it's always annoying to find people do not care when you have tried to make them unhappy."

"I see," said Margaret, "like the Christian martyrs. It must have been very exasperating for Nero when they appeared to enjoy being burnt."

Mother laughed.

"You're getting very grown up," she said.

"It must be glorious to be grown up," I sighed.

"It has its drawbacks," said mother.

"Such as putting one's hair up, and one's eyebrows up, and one's heels up," suggested Margaret.

"Eyebrows up!" said mother, "you funny children."

"You know," said Margaret, "how people look at you through lorgnettes, very super—super—?"

"Natural?" I put in.

"—cilious," said mother.

"Supercilious, that's it; you see we do learn a few long words at that school, though it is a haughty place."

Everything seemed so confusing as one grew up. Although they taught us to be truthful, we were never really supposed to be truthful enough to say to a person, "I dislike you." And though we were taught to be observant, I realized there were a good many things it was not discreet to notice.

There was one very pretty girl at school, the daughter of Lord Stranmore. Everyone wanted to talk to her, because of that, but we wanted to talk to her because she had a very charming face and manner, and never got touchy or offended with anyone. Her voice was soft, and she seemed always to be happy and gay. We used to watch her in the distance, when in the lunch interval we munched our buns and drank our glass of milk. One day she spoke to me.

"Aren't you having a glass of milk to-day?" she said.

"No," I said regretfully, "we can't afford one every day because we are not as rich as we were."

She smiled a little and took my arm.

"Well, have some every day now, my treat." She nodded to the woman who stood behind the table.

"You'll see to that, Phoebe," she said.

"Yes, my lady," said Phoebe.

"Thank you very much," I said, "you are very kind."

"Not a bit," said Diana, "we'll have another talk to-morrow."

"I wonder whether we ought to let her give us glasses of milk?" I said to Margaret when we got home that evening.

"Why not," said Margaret, "we are thirsty and poor. She is rich. Giving to the poor is ordained by the Scriptures, so we are really helping her to carry out the Commandments of God."

I was glad that she felt like this, and when we drank our milk the following morning, it was very pleasant to feel we were enjoying ourselves, and doing good at the same time.

I had the greatest admiration for my sister's judgment. She could cope with all sorts of situations. Once in Wiesbaden we gave a fifty pfennig piece to an old shabby man. We thought he was a beggar; he wasn't. Margaret held out the money, and he said:

"No thank you, little girl, I do not require money, I have plenty of my own."

Then I knew he must be a millionaire, and we had insulted him. I felt most embarrassed, but Margaret didn't turn a hair.

"You are mistaken," she said. "Can you change this fifty pfennig piece for us?" and so saved a very awkward situation.

To my great surprise and pleasure, Diana

Wetherby began to make friends. She loved books as I did, and she was very romantic. We both spoke French and German and thought alike on a good many subjects. She once saw a little sketch of mine, a picture of Sister Eleonora as I last saw her in the porch of the convent, with the doves flying 'round her.

"That is beautiful," she said, "is it Our Lady with the Holy Doves?"

I shook my head.

"No, she was a real person, a nun at the convent where we went to school. She looked like that when I saw her for the last time."

"I wish I had known her."

"I don't think the picture is very like her, because I can't draw well enough. She told me such wonderful things." I sighed.

"What about?" asked Diana.

"About life and how lovely the world could be if one lived in the right way."

Diana nodded.

"Of course it can, only we are so dependent on outside influences."

"No," I said emphatically, "not always. My nun told me everything depends on your mind, your soul, whether they are brave and glorious enough, to live in the midst of the world, and yet remain untouched by it."

"You talk very wisely," said Diana.

"I am like a bird, picking up crumbs out of the road."

"Will you come to tea one day?" said Diana. "We could talk about things better than we can here. I should like a picture of that nun."

"Take this one," I said, "I have another."

She took it and put it in a book.

"There's something pathetic about it," she said.

Then the study bell rang and we went back to work.

"It is an interesting old name," said mother, when I told her about Diana, and that I was going to have tea at Belgrave Square. "The Stranmore pictures are well known. You are a clever girl to make so valuable a friend."

"I think Sister Eleanora's picture really introduced us," I said.

"You are fanciful," said mother, "but this time your nun has been useful in a quite sensible way."

Diana's house was large and very magnificent. The carpets were so soft, I remembered Grosvenor Square immediately I walked on them. We had tea in the library out of the most delicate china cups and it was wonderful to be in luxurious surroundings. They often forgot the stains on the tea cloth at 183, and never remembered to have doilies on the plates.

Diana had framed the picture of Sister Eleanora in silver and black, and put a vase of lilies of the valley near it.

"You have almost put her in a shrine," I said. "I'm glad for she really introduced us — She would be very glad to think I had found a friend like you."

"I would like to be friends, from now," said Diana.

"We only live in Apartments," I warned her, "at any moment we might live anywhere."

"I don't care where you live," said Diana. "I like your small sister, too. she seems very self-possessed."

"I adore her," I said. "She is really the one who advises me, she always knows what she wants, and when she gets it, she likes it. I'm not quite sure what I want yet, are you?"

"I know what I want," said Diana, "but I know I shall not be allowed to have it at present anyway."

It sounded full of adventure.

"You want to go on the stage," I said with conviction.

"No," said Diana, "on the contrary I want to be like her."

She nodded towards the picture.

"A nun," I said, astonished.

"A nun. I want it more than anything in the world. Perhaps you can't understand it."

"Oh yes, I can, I used to feel that myself, only now I've seen the world and I like its bigness. There's scope — there are opportunities of being almost anything we would like to be, from where we are standing now."

"You speak as though we are standing on a hill," said Diana.

"We are, the hill of youth, looking out over the valley of the world."

"It's a nice idea; go on."

I got very interested.

"From this hill you can see all sorts of buildings, there's the theatre, but you don't want that. Then there's a big house and garden and some children — that is the house of marriage — over there is a hospital, where you could go and nurse the sick, then there is the church, where you want to be — mission houses, offices, oh, hundreds of buildings —"

"You are the strangest girl, but one cannot always go to the house one likes."

"Why not, Diana? I believe nothing can stop you if you want to get to a certain place; even ants do it, however often you put them back, they return to where they were first going."

"Then why isn't everyone doing the thing they want?"

"Because they do not want it enough."

"I wonder what you will be."

"I haven't quite decided, except that I would like to live in a house like this and meet people like you."

"I take your idea. We are on a hill and I am bound for the convent; we will see if I get what I want."

"We shall both get what we want, if we want it sufficiently."

"I expect we are both being young," she said, "like lambs skipping on the grass. They don't know why they skip, we don't know why we are talking like this. The thing we really do know is, we are friends and I hope we always shall be friends."

"I don't care for kissing, Diana, but I'd like to kiss you once, as a seal of friendship."

We kissed rather solemnly, and then Kate came to fetch me home — the first thing I noticed when I got back, was, that the carpets were not soft, and there was a stain of tea on the table cloth when we had our evening meal.

"You are invited to tea next time with me," I said to Margaret.

"I should like to see how a really well-ordered house of somebody rich is arranged," said Margaret. "Landladies have no ideas about neatness, and this house always smells of something cooking that never comes up to the table."

Mother and I laughed.

"Perhaps it's just as well it never does come up," said mother, "I've smelt it so often I don't want any."

"I saw a picture of Lord Stranmore in a paper," said Margaret, "I suppose you didn't meet him?"

"He was away in the country," I said, "they have a place in Yorkshire."

"I'd like to live in the country," said Margaret, "the air is fresh, and you can go out without meeting crowds, and getting into these everlasting streets."

"I'm afraid lack of money is rather like a cage," said mother, "we've got to stay where we are."

Margaret and I went very often to Belgrave Square. I met Lord Stranmore shortly after my second visit. A tall courtly gentleman of the old school, scholarly, handsome, a trifle absent-minded, but always with a welcome for Margaret, whose practical ways and sedate conversation, made his rather grave face break into smiles. They had long discussions about life, and he often said she was much older than he was.

"I'm just a poor feckless youth compared with your sagacious sister, Miss Elizabeth," he said to me. "She makes me quite ashamed of my absent-mindedness."

"You are really very untidy," she told him one day, as attired in an old tweed coat, a pair of

shepherd's plaid trousers, and some much worn leather slippers, he sat having tea with us.

"Look at those slippers." He eyed them ruthfully.

"One ought to be neat," said intrepid Margaret, nodding her smooth fair head.

"You are always the pink of perfection," he ventured.

"I have so few things, I am obliged to be very careful of them, but I have noticed those slippers for a long time, and I have laid my plans."

Lord Stranmore pretended to look nervous.

"Oh dear," he said, "what do you want to do with me."

"I got ten and sixpence for an old dress I sold to a funny woman, with yellow hair and a purple face, and I bought you some new ones."

"Margaret," I exclaimed.

"I have brought them with me."

She got up and went to a side table and came back undoing a brown paper parcel.

"I had a confederate. Bentley gave me one of your shoes."

Lord Stranmore shook his head.

"I don't like taking such an expensive present," he said.

"Nonsense," said Margaret. "Come put them on."

They were dark blue leather, and fitted very well. He looked up.

"You haven't bought me a new suit I hope," he said.

Diana laughed.

"No," said Margaret, "I don't mind your old suits, but you might have run something in your foot, the soles of the slippers were so thin."

It seemed to me a very good idea of Margaret's, but mother was rather annoyed.

"A man with all that money, so much older than you, Margaret."

"He wouldn't buy them himself."

"But to have noticed them at all."

"You told me to be observant."

"But you needn't have told him his shoes were shabby."

"You told me to be truthful."

"You are very exasperating," said mother.

"Lord Stranmore was very pleased with the shoes," I said, defending Margaret. "A present like that has never happened to him before probably."

"I should hope not," said mother.

"But it may happen to him again," said Margaret. "I shall keep my eye on his feet."

Mother went to tea sometimes with us, and it made us all feel we had not quite lost touch with

the world of old days, in spite of our then shabby and unattractive home. Diana and I became close friends. She told me all her thoughts and aspirations. We did not always agree, but we sympathized with each other in our separate ideals. I understood that later our paths might be wide apart, but the golden present was ours. Like a chain of lustrous beads, the days went slipping by — a rosary of mellowed pleasures, and we had not yet reached any cross upon the chain.

Unfortunately our constant visits to Diana's charming home created in us a strange discontent with the other part of our lives — the shabby gas ridden house of Gloucester place could only seem more shabby by contrast. Margaret, too, noticed. We were both growing a little dissatisfied with it.

"It's a dull life," said Margaret to me one day, "except the bits of it we spend with Diana. I wish we had happily married parents instead of unhappy ones. Mother is perfectly sweet, and generally manages to make her life pleasant, but what about father? I think him a very unsatisfactory character."

"I agree with you, but ought one to criticize fathers at all?"

"Fathers are men," said Margaret, "and if they forget where they've put their children and forget to make their children happy for months at a time,

they can't expect their children to think them as divine as they are supposed to."

"There's that honor thy father and the mother business," I reminded her.

"You can honor what he represents and you can love him if you want to, but you need not be blind to his faults."

"I used not to think that fathers could have faults, any more than mothers."

"They can and ours has," said Margaret. "And as that is the case, you and I must make our own arrangements. I intend to live my life in one or two places, not first in one town, then in another, then in one country, and then in another."

"It is jerky," I said.

"Very unsettling," went on Margaret. "You can't make plans about people, because you go away, just as everything is shaping."

"Plans about people, how do you mean?"

"I mean the Stranmores."

"What plans?"

"I have made a plan about the Stranmores, and unless we get jerked off to Boulogne, or Dinard, or some cheap Swiss village, I shall be able to carry it out."

"Is it a plan with Diana?"

"No, it's a plan about Diana's father."

"Lord Stranmore, what plan about him?"

"He doesn't know it, but I've decided to marry him."

"But," I said, "he's an old man, he's old enough to be your father."

"I would rather have him for a father, but as I couldn't choose, I shan't mind being married to him at all. I like him and I like that house. I should really enjoy being married to that house."

"But about love and all that. It's awful not marrying for love."

"It's awful marrying for love, sometimes. Look at father and mother. They married for love, I expect, and yet whenever they see each other, which is very seldom, he's inclined to be crabby."

"But then we agreed, Margaret, he's very clever, but not a satisfactory character."

"Lord Stranmore is a satisfactory character. He has good manners and is very kind."

"Suppose he doesn't want to marry you?"

"I think I'm rather nice," said Margaret. "I don't look at all bad with my hair up. He laughs sometimes at my jokes. I expect he will want to marry me."

"I expect he will," I said with conviction.

CHAPTER V

ALL SORTS OF FRIENDS

The more I saw of Diana, the more anxious I was to keep her friendship. Everyone with whom she came in touch, loved her. Her mind was pellucid as a crystal stream, her life full of good deeds and kindly thoughts — she did not boast of her religion, but lived it. Meditative, remote, she lived as though already she wore the somber veil of monasticism — She attended the services at the Oratory, and the other big Cathedrals of London, and I learned that she was to join, whenever the opportunity offered, the convent of the Gray Sisters in a little village not far from the sea, in the south of England.

"You see I cannot leave my father, I cannot forsake one duty, even though I consider another calls me. I shall wait for his consent, he would be so lonely if I left him."

"He might marry," I said timidly. I wanted to tell her about Margaret, but did not like to.

"I hope he will, that would release me."

. . . . . .

Margaret and I had many adventures and one

day we went to see a fortune teller. It cost two and six each to consult her, but we couldn't resist it. The flat where the clairvoyant lived was over a shop in Sloane street. It was very dark, and smelt of joss-sticks when we got in — joss-sticks and tea and buttered toast. The black boy, dressed in red and gold, was very awe-inspiring, and made us feel quite excited.

"Madam is engaged, but will see you in ten minutes," he said, as he showed us up into a small room with blue plush curtains, and Eastern tables with pearl bits let into them. There were two long couches with faded yellow and red striped silk covers, and several cushions of shabby gray velvet with gold scrolls on them — There were pots about, with paper flowers in them, very dusty, and on the mantelpiece a long row of photographs of ladies, signed but not in frames, also very dusty — The curtains were drawn close, so that very little light came in, and this gave the place a gloomy and depressing appearance — A cuckoo clock struck four, very suddenly out of a dark corner — the little wooden door opened with a whirr — the cuckoo jerked out — did four cuckoos, and clicked back furiously, as if greatly annoyed at having to do it at all.

Margaret jumped so much, that she dropped the five shillings she was holding, and when the page

boy came in we were groveling about on the floor trying to find it.

"What you doing?" he said suspiciously.

"Looking for two half crowns," said Margaret.

"Who lost them?" said he.

"We did, and if we don't find them we can't go in at all and have our fortunes told, so you may as well help us."

We found one near the fireplace, and the page boy found the other, and looked as if he wanted to keep it, for he kept rubbing it on his sleeve, as if to get it clean.

"That will do, thank you," I said. "It's not dirty and we are in a hurry."

He reluctantly handed it over, saying, "All right, come dis way please."

The clairvoyant was a thin dark woman, with very piercing blackened eyes, and a spot of pink on each cheek. She had on a red Turkish hat, with gold sequins, and a red trouser dress with imitation jewels all over it. She sat majestically in a throne-like chair, a crystal ball in her hand, and stared at us, as we stood in the doorway. The room was curtained in black velvet, and several joss-sticks smoldered in a long blue glass vase, on a little table — dropping the ashes, so that it was covered with white powder and looked very untidy.

"Sit down, young ladies," said the fortune teller.

"Have you got the money?"

Margaret held it out.

"Put it on that gold tray over there; I never touch money with my hands. It interferes with the influence of the spirit world."

Margaret looked surprised.

"Don't you touch money at all?" she asked.

The fortune teller looked annoyed.

"Of course I do, after business hours. Do you think I live on air?"

She pointed at me.

"Now we will commence. You are a very clever singer. Your voice will make your fortune, thousands will flock to hear you."

"But—" said Margaret.

"Silence," said the lady in red. "You will rise to fame, you are engaged to be married to a tall fair man, a diplomat, very rich."

"I don't know anyone like that," I said.

"You will, don't interrupt. Your mother left you her fine gift of music, but nothing else."

"My sister doesn't sing at all," said Margaret truthfully.

"She will," said the woman, quite unmoved.

"Beware of a dark man with a dark moustache and small imperial."

"I don't know one," I said. "I don't know any of the people you've been talking about."

"You will meet them soon," she replied.

"I don't think I'll have my fortune told," said Margaret. "Can I have my two and sixpence back?"

The woman looked very annoyed.

"Certainly not, you have wasted my valuable time, and I must be paid for that. My words will come true, you will return to me."

She hit a gong and the page appeared.

"Show the ladies out, Abdul. Good afternoon, ladies."

When we got into the street, we felt very disconsolate. "Five shillings gone," Margaret said. "I wish I'd bought those hankeys we saw at Evan's yesterday, instead."

I agreed. We had wasted our money.

"But the little wooden bird in the corner knew a thing or two," I said. "He said we were cuckoos four times."

We laughed all the way home about the knowing little cuckoo clock.

. . . . . .

A certain number of friends used to visit us in Gloucester Place, but we could not entertain anybody very well, for poor stout Mrs. Jones considered it rather fast to have late dinner.

"I haven't ever had late dinner in my house," she said very decidedly, "and I don't wish to begin

it at my time of life, and me a widow, too."

What the demise of the late Mr. Jones had to do with not getting late dinner, Margaret and I could never understand.

"Perhaps he made her swear never to have it, on his deathbed," said Margaret. "She couldn't very well after that, you see, could she?"

There was a certain Mr. Huntley who visited us fairly often. He was a tall, spare, elegant man, whose clothes were very well cut. He had a cadaverous face with neat, close side whiskers, and an eye glass permanently in his eye, "probably nailed in," said Margaret.

He smoked big cigars in a black ebony holder, and sat with his long thin legs crossed, and his hands lying inertly on the arms of his chair. He was very kind, and occasionally took mother and me to theatres, and I used to watch him whenever he came in to coffee, and try to fathom him. Types had always interested me tremendously. He had a quick dry way of speaking, and always seemed to be sarcastic. He scarcely ever admitted that other people did good, and never allowed he was wrong.

"My dear lady," he used to say, whenever a discussion arose, "women have not a proper perception. A man of my wide experience ought to know."

He used to criticize us when we were in the room,

and stare at us, and make comments about us, just as you would discuss the points of a dog or a horse.

"Elizabeth is shaping," he said once, "she has good hair and teeth, and a very fine complexion. Good hair is very important, believe me."

"Why," said Margaret, who didn't like him, "why more important than eyes and nose?"

"A woman with a wisp of hair, my good child, does not look well in a negligée."

"Well, you needn't see her in a negligée," said Margaret.

And Mr. Huntley laughed and said "She was most refreshing."

Margaret and I considered him a very puzzling person. I was now seventeen and my mother told me that Mr. Huntley was very well off, and had hinted that he would like to marry me. She said it was important for me to marry where a certain amount of money was, because with our income, I could not afford to marry a poor man.

"Of course, only if you like Mr. Huntley."

"I don't," I said, "he is always arguing, and you know that would grow worse, if he had a wife to argue with."

"He is comfortably off, and could be managed with tact, I am sure."

"I don't think I will, thank you, mother."

And so ended the episode.

Sometimes a Comte and Comtesse de la Roche used to come to tea. He was a very stout, old young man with no moustache, pince nez, and very tight fitting clothes. He had a squeaky voice and rather a pawing manner. His wife was not young, but very well off — She was fond of noisy jewelry which jingled as she moved — huge brooches and oriental beads — her hair was dark red, with black and gray streaks, and her face was very red, and she was very fond of food.

"I feel sure she would be more interested in us if we were chicken patties," said Margaret.

She called the Comte "Tweetkins," which seemed too small for him somehow — When they went out to dinner parties, they were always the first to arrive, and they never bothered to say who was at the party, but talked about the menu instead; the Comtesse used to tick people off thus:

"The Harry Pawkins — charming people, their soufflé of peaches was a dream — such magnificent dinners they give. Lady Simkins — rather a nice woman, but doesn't know how to cater for guests."

Then there was a Mrs. Benjamin Antrobus, who knew her peerage backwards — She could not speak of ordinary commoners, but only mentioned lords and ladies. She had once been told she was a little like the Grand Duchess of Sachs Badenheim, and always afterwards emulated that lady in her cos-

tume — She had a beautiful carriage and pair, and never by any chance gave her less fortunate friends a lift in it — Margaret and I were walking up Bond street one rainy afternoon, and just as we were about to cross over, this lady drew up in her carriage, a block in the traffic preventing her progress. She was the only occupant, and we were very wet and cold. She nodded and opened the window and we thought she was going to invite us in, and perhaps drive us home, but she didn't.

"Isn't it horribly wet," she said. "Luckily you have not far to go, you girls. Give my love to your mother."

The carriage moved on, bearing her with it in elegant self-satisfied dryness.

"Still," said Margaret to me, "I'd rather be us."

These people only interested me as studies. I did not admire them, I had nothing in common with them, and they only made me more determined to make friends like Diana. They were entirely obsessed with a shabby sort of worldliness, they hadn't a stirring ambition which shows character. They were not even failures, for they had never striven for anything.

The little maid of all work was a type as well. She was very pretty, and always cheerful, though she never seemed to have any rest at all. She rushed in with our meals, and rushed out again, to answer

the innumerable bells. Our landlady always seemed to want her, when she was at the very top of the house, and her voice was heard calling crossly all day long.

"Mabel — where is that creature?"

Or,

"Can't you hurry, there's number four wants their tea."

As far as we could see she was always hurrying. Her cap was askew, her collar never quite fitted on to her dress, either the print one or the blackbone, in fact she scarcely had time to dress herself at all.

"Why don't you go away?" said Meg one day when she brought up our supper. Mother was out.

"What's the good," said Mabel, "it's the same everywhere as here."

"But Mrs. Jones is horrid to you."

"She's an old cat," said Mabel, folding her arms, "but most mistresses are."

"Are they?" said Meg. "Lady Diana isn't rude to her servants."

"Oh, aristocrats," said Mabel. "I shouldn't never get a place in that sort of house."

"I don't see why you shouldn't," said Meg, "because you are never rude; you're always working, you never grumble, and you have no time to yourself."

"Ah! well," said Mabel, "I shouldn't know what

to do with myself, if I had. Lawk, there's Mrs. Sparrow's bell, I shall catch it talking while she is waiting for hot water."

She hurried out.

I never heard her spoken to like a human being. I never saw her but she was in a tearing hurry, bearing a dish, a can, a tray; or down on her knees scrubbing and cleaning — one day when she was laying our tea, she seemed quieter than usual. Her eyes looked red.

"Are you unhappy?" I asked.

"No, it's nothing," she said, turning away.

"I'm sorry if anything's made you sad, Mabel."

"Don't you bother about me, I'm all right."

After that day, she seemed to lose a great deal of her brightness, and went about more quietly, and her eyes were often red, as if she had been crying. Some months elapsed and one day she didn't appear when we rang the bell. Another maid answered it, a sullen elderly woman. I asked Mrs. Jones where Mabel was.

"She's gone," said the landlady, "disgraceful creature."

"Disgraceful," I said, "how can you say that. She was good tempered, worked very hard and had no holidays."

"Good thing, too. What do the likes of her want with a holiday; she was only a charity girl."

"I think holidays make people work better."

"Not her sort. Charity school children have got to work. They aren't everyone's money."

"She did work."

"It's no good you young ladies talking. She got into trouble and I've packed her off."

"Well," said Meg indignantly, "you are a very unkind person to be horrid to anyone just because they have got some trouble. Don't you know that is the very time to be nice to them?"

Mrs. Jones sniffed.

"I'm a good woman and a church goer," she said, "and I don't intend to have people that aren't respectable in my house."

And she sailed out.

And Meg said, "I'm glad we are not respectable, aren't you, darling?"

I asked mother about Mabel, but she seemed vague, and I asked Kate, and she said we were not to bother our heads about something we did not understand.

All the same it worried me a great deal.

. . . . . .

Then quite suddenly dad turned up at 183. We came back from school one day and found him sitting there. He had on very smart clothes, and a big cigar in the corner of his mouth. He stood on the hearthrug with his back to the fireplace.

"Hello, dad," said Margaret.

"Well, young ladies," said dad.

We kissed him, and then all stood staring at each other.

I broke the silence.

"I hope you are quite well," I said, "it's a good time since we saw you. Have you any money, or are we still poor?"

"Your father has made a lot of money," said mother quickly, "and we needn't live here any more."

"Oh dear," said Meg, "where are we going now?"

"We are staying in London," said mother, "but we are to have a suite of rooms at the Hotel Metropole."

"Oh!" said Margaret, much relieved, "that's all right."

"Why, don't you wish to leave London?" said dad with a quizzing look at Margaret.

"She doesn't want to go abroad again," I said, rushing to the rescue, "we are tired of moving about."

"Quite right," said dad, puffing away at his cigar, "it's no use living abroad, when girls are growing up."

"The girls have made some very nice friends here," said mother. "I think that is why they

would like to remain in London, for a time at least."

"Quite," said my father, "exactly. Now how soon can you be ready to move?"

"As soon as you like and we can get Kate to pack for us," said mother.

"You'd better buy yourselves a few things," said dad, taking a leather case out of his pocket, and counting out four ten pound notes, gave them to mother, and to each of us a sovereign.

We kissed him quite enthusiastically.

"Now run away, we have lots to talk about," he said.

And much excited, we hurried up to our bedroom, to impart the thrilling news to Kate.

"Kate," called Margaret, "come down."

The sewing machine stopped and Kate hurried downstairs.

"Yes, what is it?" she asked.

"Look," said Margaret.

And we held out our sovereigns.

"Where did you get them?"

"Dad's here, he gave them to us, and he's got a great deal more, too."

"So he's turned up again," said Kate, "wonder where he got it from."

"Nothing debenture, nothing have," said I.

We always thought the quotation very appropriate to dad's case.

"There must be a good many fools knocking around," said Kate.

"They shouldn't be fools," said Margaret. "At any rate, we are rich again, we may as well enjoy it while we can."

"Said dad we may as well
Go to a smart hotel,
Where cooking doesn't smell,
And someone answers the bell."

I recited on the spur of the moment.

"And how long, for you can never tell," said Margaret.

And we took hands and swung 'round together, and flopped on the bed, which clanged like a steel foundry.

"You'll break them springs," said Kate warningly.

"What are a few springs?" said Meg, "you don't seem to understand we are well off again."

She laughed rather sardonically.

"Remember, I've seen these spurts into affluence before."

"They're very refreshing," I said.

. . . . . .

The next few days were spent in packing up. Kate folding up the old worn garments, sniffed and made caustic remarks.

"Wonder how long we shall be at the Metropole Hotel?" she said, "whether we shall have to do a moonlight flit."

"The main thing is, we are not going abroad," said Margaret, smoothing out her hair ribbons, and putting them carefully away in a black lacquer box.

"Are you going to take these?" said Kate, holding up some much worn red Viyella blouses with thick black stripes.

"No," said I, "we had to live those down at school. I don't see why we should hamper our future by wearing them in a new place. You wouldn't think a piece of woolen stuff would cause such mental anguish."

"We're glad to be off with the old blouse before we're on with the new," said Margaret, casting them into a corner.

Dad looked in after supper, on the evening before we left. He brought a bottle of port and some nuts and chocolates and we sat in a circle 'round the fire eating them. We had a glass of port each, which made us feel very gay and cheerful. We laughed a good deal and the future looked very rosy. The room got full of cigar smoke and presently Mr. Huntley came in and the Comte and Comtesse de la Roche, and they had some port, too, and became very much more genial than I had seen them, and the Comtesse's face got very red indeed. I thought

how different she looked to mother, who had got on a new dress, and was fanning herself lazily.

"I shan't have to marry anyone rich now, I suppose," I said.

I felt very honest and frank, I think it was because of the glass of port. Everyone laughed and Mr. Huntley said, "You will probably be married for your money now."

And dad nodded and smiled and puffed out cigar smoke and said, "Extremely good! Huntley, you are a man of great perception."

And then we were sent up to bed — it seemed quite cool in the passage outside, after that room — the gas was turned down, and you could hear a tap hissing downstairs, and cricket chirping somewhere below.

"Wonder how we shall like the Metropole?" I said, as arm in arm we climbed to the top floor. "I wrote to Diana yesterday and told her our new address."

"Did you?" said Meg, yawning, "she'll be very surprised, I expect."

"So you needn't marry Lord Stranmore now."

"I can't change my plans, just because dad chooses to come back again with some money," said she. "And, after all, we really don't know how long this period of prosperity will last."

"I hope it lasts a good while, but I don't seem

to mind very much. I like the idea of being off somewhere fresh, where it's big and clean and lots of people, and life and movement. I'm looking forward to that."

"M — yes," said Margaret.

"Funny stuff, wine, isn't it? It makes you feel so cheerful and hopeful and as if everything is for the best. Even the Comtesse didn't seem so bad this evening and the room looked cosier somehow."

"It's made you very chatty," said Margaret, getting into bed.

"It has," I agreed. "I feel as if I could go on talking all night."

"Do you think we shall have a nice bedroom at the Metropole?"

"Oh, do go to sleep," said Margaret, putting out the light.

"All right," I said, agreeable to the last. "My nose does feel hot, doesn't yours?"

There was no answer.

CHAPTER VI

PROSPERITY

Our suite of rooms looked out toward Charing Cross station, and over the busy thoroughfare of Northumberland Avenue. The bedrooms were beautifully lofty and we had our own bathroom attached.

We arrived in time for tea, and a waiter brought it up on a silver tray.

Mother sat and poured out the tea, and looked as if she had returned to her proper setting, and as we ate we admired the different surroundings, the lace cloth, dainty cakes, and general air of comfort which had been so lacking in our last home.

"I like all the new noises," I said, "the page boys downstairs calling out '503 please' are very attractive, and it makes me wonder who 503 is? I hope they'll call out our number one day."

"I'm going to the theatre to-night with your father," said mother, "but we shall all dine downstairs before. I think I'll have a little rest before I dress. You might like to take a walk on the Embankment with Kate."

When we were ready we went downstairs. The hall was teeming with life. Porters carrying boxes in and out. Little groups of well-dressed people having tea in the Lounge. Prosperous looking men drinking whiskies and sodas and smoking big cigars. The lift gliding up and down full of outgoing and incoming visitors. Pages walking about, calling out those enchanting numbers. When we got out, it was very busy too, with the laden trains lumbering over the bridge, streams of traffic passing under it. We walked to Cleopatra's Needle and stood looking out over the river. A fussy little tug towing some coal barges came puffing up. Some gulls flew low on the water, the sun was going down, and sky and river looked very golden. In the distance the Houses of Parliament looked misty and ephemeral. "London is beautiful," I said. "I didn't know it was."

"This is nicer than Gloucester Place," said Margaret, "and do you know we've come back to where we were before, for there's Whitehall Court."

We seemed to be going 'round in a circle. Big Ben boomed out six o'clock in his sonorous tones, and after him in a smaller voice, the Horse Guards' clock chimed in, like a little boy trying to copy his father saying six.

We wandered along arm in arm talking of old times, watching the passersby, and the sunset, and reluctantly turned back home.

Dinner in the large restaurant was quite an adventure. A band played, the waiters handed us dish after dish, there were pretty girls, well dressed older people, and children, all having dinner, and looking as if they hadn't a care in the world.

"It's like being at a party every night," said Margaret. Later, when mother and dad had gone to the theatre, we were just going upstairs, we heard a page boy calling out 183 — 183 please.

"It's us," said Margaret to me. And I beckoned him.

"Miss Sutherland?" he asked.

"Yes," I said.

And he handed me a letter. It was from Diana.

"Isn't it fun being a number instead of a name?" I said.

"Rather like a convict, perhaps," said Margaret.

I read my letter.

Dearest Elizabeth:

I am delighted at your good fortune. Is it nice at a hotel? Come to tea to-morrow, both of you, and tell me all about it.

Your loving
DIANA.

. . . . . .

"It's noisy, but nice," said Margaret, munching buttered toast on the following day at Diana's. "Our rooms are high and spacious, and we only

have to ring to get any sort of servant we like."

"There's a clockish thing," I explained. "It's got hands on it, and it points — one ring for a waiter — two for the chambermaid, three for a page boy."

"Three for the little boy who cries out the names," misquoted Margaret. "We rang them all when we got there, just to see if it worked all right."

"Did it?" asked Diana, amused.

"It did," said Margaret. "They were very cross, until Elizabeth explained to them, it was for the good of the hotel to have the thing in proper working order."

"You two will never grow up," said Diana.

"Only we have really," I said. "Look at us, Diana, I'm to put my hair up next week when I'm nineteen, and I really don't know what I'd better do about myself when it is up. At least I needn't marry Mr. Huntley."

"Who is he?" asked Diana.

"A rather rich man who wanted to marry me, when we were poor."

"That's only a week ago," broke in Margaret, "when we were poor. Rich one day, poor the next, what a life, but it's made us very adaptable."

We soon grew used to the new life, and were left to amuse ourselves on half days and holidays. The girls at school were very interested in our new

dresses and new address, and seemed to like us a great deal better now we had some money. Many who had not troubled with us tried to be friendly, but they were not the sort of girls we cared about.

"I'm sorry I've been a little standoffish with you, Elizabeth," said one of these claimants for our favor. She was a little fat dark girl, beautifully dressed, and a grand carriage came to fetch her and her sister away every day after school.

"I didn't notice you had," I said.

She looked rather crestfallen.

"Would you like me to drive you and your sister home one evening?"

"Yes, I should."

And so it came about that we drew up to the Metropole one evening in their luxurious landau.

"Will you spend the day on Sunday?" she asked. "My father and mother would be very pleased to see you both."

"If we can," I said. "Good-night and thank you for the drive."

"I don't want to go there much," said Margaret, "only I should like to study the type, and see what sort of house they live in."

Silvia and Diamond Montebello lived in an enormous house in Park Lane.

Mr. Montebello was on the Stock Exchange and very successful by the look of the house. They

were Brazilians. Mrs. Montebello was very fat and very richly dressed and had lots of diamond rings on. There was a boy about twenty, also fat and very dark with a rather sulky expression, and there was an old lady, the grandmother, fatter than all the rest.

We all sat down to luncheon and the butler looked much more aristocratic than his employers. They had an enormous meal, with all kinds of rich food, and there were orchids on the table, and gold ornaments and vases. The father and mother did not talk much, and the old lady talked about the food the whole time.

"This is verra good soup, another helping please," said the old grandmother.

"What a rich flavor this salmon has. Just a taste more."

"These cutlets melt in the mouth, I must just have another."

"Ah! what a soufflé, it can't be beaten."

"It had to be beaten, or it wouldn't have been a soufflé," said the youth of twenty, who had not spoken before.

"Very sharp of you, my boy," said Mr. Montebello, with a gusty laugh.

"What did Manuel say?" asked the old lady.

"He said the soufflé had to be beaten," explained mamma.

"If it has to be eaten, I'll have some more," said the old lady.

"Don't bother to explain," said Diamond to me. "She's awfully deaf."

"Your father in the city?" said papa to me, when he had finished his lunch, and was resting after his labors.

"No, I don't think so," I said. "He's interested in railways."

"Doing good business?" he asked.

"I think so, because we're much richer than we were."

"I tell Mrs. Montebello to go and call on your mother."

"Thank you very much," I said.

"Excellent peaches," murmured the old lady, in the background. "I'm sorry I can't eat another."

And as we trooped upstairs to the drawing room, Margaret whispered to me, "It's exactly like going to lunch with a party of tennis balls. They are all so round."

"Seen my pictures?" said papa. "I defy anyone to have a better show. I wouldn't mind having the interest on what I paid for them."

"Lord Stranmore has fine pictures, too," said Margaret.

"Has he though?" said papa, "and how do you know?"

"I've seen them; his daughter goes to the same school as we do."

"Don't Diamond and Silvia know her?"

"No, we don't," said Diamond. "She's not particularly sociable."

"She's a darling," said Meg, "and very sweet to us. She doesn't know many people."

"Fancy not noticing our Diamond and Silvia in their expensive plush coats with white fox fur," said Mrs. Montebello in a vexed way. "You can't get away from it, they're the best dressed girls in the school."

"They are, indeed," we assured her soothingly.

Only somehow what seemed to them a virtue, seemed stupid to me. Why dress so richly when you were only doing lessons or playing in a dusty courtyard.

At last the time came to leave, and we were very tired and glad to go.

"I'm sorry we went," said Meg on the way back. "I don't think I shall be able to eat a meal again to-day."

"They are very good natured," I said, "and we are rather unkind to talk about them when we have been entertained by them. At the same time they make me feel quite sure that the type I like best is Diana."

I deducted from that visit that it doesn't sound

nice to talk about food too much, and to wear such expensive clothes that you cannot enjoy yourself.

"Montebello is one of the richest men on the Stock Exchange," said dad when I talked to him that evening. "I think you must allow her to call upon you, my dear, he might be useful."

"I'm afraid we've put our foot in it this time," said Margaret, "tearing 'round looking for types, and the question arises when the dad type meets the Montebello type — who wins?"

"We may possibly move into St. James' Palace soon," I said, giggling, "unless Mr. Montebello is cleverer than he's fat."

. . . . . .

And so the Montebellos called upon the Sutherlands.

Mrs. Montebello brought a mammoth box of chocolates, and Mr. Montebello and my father had a cocktail. We ate the chocolates; we wished they had been given to us by people we liked better.

It was plain to see, as the intimacy with the Montebello's increased, that the wily old stock-broker and our tricky parent were stalking each other.

Dinners took place. Meetings at offices took place. Mr. Montebello and dad sat together over maps, drinking cocktails and words like "founder shares," "debentures," "rolling stock" and "con-

cession" filled the air. Someone was going to make some money and someone was going to lose it.

"I hope we don't have to go back to Gloucester Place," said Margaret.

Just at this time, during the stalking process, about the end of May, we had a delightful invitation to go up to Yorkshire and stay with Diana.

Margaret was enchanted.

"Think how splendid to stay in a real country house, with lawns and a park, and a river of one's own, and everything we read about in books."

Mother was very pleased for us to go and got us some nice clothes.

"The air will do you both good," she said, "and as I am having a very good time here, I shan't miss you. Your father is very amiable at the moment, and most generous — mind you behave nicely, and pray tell Margaret not to be too truthful. You know what she is."

"The Stranmores have a tremendous sense of humor," I said, "so they won't mind a bit what she says."

. . . . . .

Stranmore House stood on a hill overlooking a stretch of wooded valley, and a winding river that rushed over boulders and fell in small waterfalls, and curved and gurgled down the dale. Beyond, to the right in a blue haze, stretched the moors. An

old-fashioned flower garden climbed up the hill at the side, and the long windows of a picture gallery opened out on to the Terrace. The house itself was long and low, with an immense portico. The carriage met us at the station, and we drove down lanes just fresh with the new leaves. Tea was served in the immense hall, where a log fire burned, for it was cold here in the Uplands, and after tea, Diana showed us our rooms, which smelt of lavender, and had bowls of primroses on the dressing table and mantelpiece.

Down the slope of the hill on the way to the river, was the ancient Chapel and ruined monastery, supposed to be a thousand years old, where the silent-footed monks, so legend ran, walked in a long procession on moonlit nights.

"The Chapel belongs to the house," said Diana, "and I have made it as beautiful as I could. To-morrow you shall see it. In the meantime, as you have left your beloved Kate to look after Mrs. Sutherland, Rose will unpack and do anything you want."

Dinner in the ancient dining room, with pictures of dead and gone Stranmores, the ladies with slender hands, like Diana's, long swan-like throats — their hair decorated with a filmy lace-beribboned cap, or else dressed high with curls, was very imposing. The servants moved quietly, the long polished refectory

table glittered with silver and crystal. A bowl of violets in the center perfumed the whole room.

Lord Stranmore sat at the head, in a huge carved chair, and dispensed hospitality with charming courtesy. We felt very much at home, in spite of the grand surroundings, because our hosts were so simple and unaffected.

Diana packed us off to bed early, because of the journey. We found a fire burning in our room, and she came up to light us to bed, candle in hand.

"You live in the loveliest home in the world, Diana," said Margaret, "and you look as if you did. We shall dream of the ghostly monks to-night, I expect."

"Thank you for having us, we are both so happy," I said.

"Then the house of Stranmore has not lived in vain," said Diana, and with this pretty compliment she went out, shading the candle with her hand, so that the light shone on her face, making it look very fair and delicate.

"There's no doubt, having a company of wonderful ancestors in the background of one's life is very helpful," said Meg.

I nodded.

"And having a fine house, and great estates of your own must give an air of queenliness. Possessions, that's what it is."

"Of course ancestors are all very well, they look elegant enough, but it's rather like photographs. The artists who painted them, made them look their best, and left out the blemishes. Then look what a lot of gout they leave you."

"As we don't know much about our ancestors, we could be ancestors ourselves instead. Families have to begin somewhere, don't they?" I said thoughtfully.

"We shouldn't make bad ones," said Margaret, who had got into her dressing gown, and was sitting on the hearthrug nursing her knees. "You see we've had a sort of training, we know about different sorts of people, and we have chosen rather nice ones to copy. I shouldn't be at all surprised if some day we adorn the walls of a famous house and are pointed out to future generations, as those clever Sutherland sisters, famous for their wit and beauty."

"I don't call myself either witty or beautiful," I said.

"Perhaps not beautiful," said Margaret, "but you're very attractive, and you think a good deal, and you're tactful, and you've got a way of making people wonder whether you're as nice as you look. I suppose those ancestors will be mine some day by marriage."

I laughed.

"When do you think your plan will mature?"

"You always laugh at it," said Margaret serenely.

"I can't help it, Meg, because the victim seems quite unconscious of the fate in store for him."

"Does he?" said Margaret oracularly.

"Isn't this a cosy room. Let's have a chocolate; there are some over there in my dressing bag."

I found them, and there were silent munchings for a few minutes. Then I jumped up.

"Let's put out the candles and see what the garden looks like in the moonlight."

I blew them out and drew the curtain. The moon was rising over the distant moorland, and the ruined monastery looked black and mysterious down the hill.

"It looks ghostly," I said, "come here."

She came over and we stood looking over the shadowy landscape together.

"Isn't night queer?" I said. "It seems soft and gentle and as if there couldn't be awful things happening."

"But there are," said Meg gravely.

"The moon looks down on much more dreadful things than the sun."

"I hope you will marry Stranmore and come here, Meg," I said impulsively. "Anything to get away from our funny, unsettled life."

She patted my shoulder.

"I think everything will be all right," she said. "We have made up our minds to do great things. Remember we are going to be ancestors ourselves."

. . . . . .

We walked down the stone steps, and through the gate towards the chapel, after breakfast next morning. Diana opened the old carved wooden door and we went in. She had put in blue glass windows, and the effect was unusually beautiful. On the altar stood a large silver crucifix, flanked by tall candlesticks, and silver vases, filled with white lilies. A powder blue carpet ran up the aisle and there were blue hassocks and cushions on the chairs. Three silver lamps hung from the arched roof, their flickering light shaded with blue glass.

"This to me," said Diana, "is the soul of Stranmore, enshrined in silver and blue. The color of the sky and the river."

"How calm it is, it seems a holy place."

"That's because it's so old and so many prayers have been said here, down the ages."

"How do you coax your villagers?" said Margaret, "they don't generally like these sort of trappings."

"I'm an old rascal," said Diana, "I give their children tea every Wednesday afternoon, after their singing lesson, and the little girls who have been

good receive a tiny present. I make them walk in pretty processions, in white dresses and veils, which I also give them, and I teach them to sing the old hymns to the Madonna, the Litany of the Virgin, in English. It's bribery."

"I don't call that bribery, unless it is bribery for God to say He will reward us if we are good, and send us to a bad place if we are not."

"I think it's a nice idea, Diana," I said. "The children have little enough pleasure in their own homes. I don't see why you shouldn't bribe them with pretty ribbons and pictures."

I knew the value of pleasant surroundings myself, and I realized how different it was here, to that stuffy house in Gloucester Place — how much more it inclined us to be good natured and well mannered, when everything we touched or looked at was valuable and attractive to the eye.

We moved up to the organ. Diana opened it and began to play softly. I sat on one of the blue cushioned chairs and Margaret leaned against the side of the organ watching her as she played and sang the Litany of the Virgin.

Star of the Morning.....*Stella Matutina*
Gate of Ivory
Consoler of the Afflicted.....*Consolatrix Afflictorum*
Refuge of Sinners.....*Refugum Peccatorum*
Mother Most Amiable.....*Mater Amibilis*

Virgin Most Pure.....*Virgo Purissima*
Pray For Us.....*Ora Pro Nobis*

The sunbeams slanted through the long windows, and the whole tiny edifice was bathed in an azure light. I could almost see the nun's veil clouding Diana's luxurious hair, and the nun's habit clothing her slender body as she played. I knew that attractive and alluring as the world might seem, with its glamor and dance and song, she was not of it, nor did she desire to be. I saw her kinship with Sister Eleanora and I felt a faint thrill of awe — It was as if the two were one, knit together by a divine chain of thought, which led them out of the heat and glare of the world into a cool twilit pasture where they beheld the face of God. I knew also I should not walk in those pastures — I should be in the midst of the earth's battle — I should go into a garden, but it would be a garden full of roses, and with me a companion — someone who would gather the roses, and listen to the song of the birds with me — someone I loved — a man — a lover.

The music ceased, I came back to ordinary things. What could have made me think like this, I had never thought of a man before in this wise. Marriage had been hinted to me as an enterprise, for a home, but this was different. This thought was born of a mystic exultation, almost of a religious

fervor — it was born of music, in a temple of peace — it was a good thought, the most divine thought I had ever had.

"The King of Love my Shepherd is."

The sweet notes flowed from the organ, and whilst Diana lifted up her eyes in ecstatic contemplation of a Heavenly Bridegroom — I sat there thinking of that other Love — the Love which peoples the earth — the biggest thought in the world —

I found some books — love poems, histories of great and noble women, who had loved, and been loved again. They appealed to the new imaginative mood I was in, and as Diana let us do as we liked, she herself absorbed in her housekeeping, tending her chapel and devoting herself to the village children, and Lord Stranmore and Margaret off together for long drives in the pony trap, I was left in an enjoyable solitude, wandering in the woods, or by the tumbling river, contemplating the glories of the earth and nature from a new standpoint. Everything looked different, more beautiful, more full of meaning, more full of purpose. The morning took on an added splendor, and the sunset a tenderer significance, because of the new thoughts which possessed me since that day in the chapel — The Universe was somehow mine, and light illumined my heart.

"You have become quite a recluse, wandering off by yourself," said Diana.

"Yes," I said.

I felt a little reserved and shy, not so ready to confide as I was, even in my dear Diana, but she had the sweet instinct of friendship.

"Dear Elizabeth, are the little love fairies calling you with their soft voices?"

"Diana, you are a witch, you have magic powers to know the hearts of people."

"My witchery is only the affection I have for you, and I am quite observant, too. The books you read are love stories, and poetry, they are a sign post to your present thoughts."

"Do you think me too romantic? It's not a sign that I am not good, just because I would like someone to love me like they do in books, and be eager to see me and think me beautiful?"

"My dear, it's the call of youth, and earthly love can be as fine and pure as the other. It depends on yourself, and whom you choose out of the world to love."

"Everything up here makes me happy and contented. When I go back it will be different."

"Why — you will not be different?"

I sighed.

"I'm afraid I shall, a little. I seem to turn the color of the place I stand on, like a chameleon.

Here everything is refined and full of tradition. The house, the woods — the river — the stretching moorland — it's vast — big — not shut in by bricks, not disturbed by the noise of traffic. It's a place to think in, and to think grandly."

"I do not think you will change."

"I do not want to change, but dad has such contrasting ideas. There's conflict, his code is not mine. I'm fond of him, he has a strong personality and he dominates me — us — mother — not Margaret. She just stares at him and does what she likes."

"Then you mustn't go back yet. Saturate yourself with these new thoughts and your new individuality, then nothing will matter."

I looked at her.

"Thank you, Diana. I have found my soul here in the Uplands."

. . . . . .

A week later, a letter came from mother saying there was still more money, and that we were going to take a house in Knightsbridge.

The house is being furnished, and will be ready in a few weeks, come back soon. There is so much to talk over and arrange. I look forward to giving some really smart parties, and a coming-out dance for my pretty Elizabeth will be the first. Love from us both, and from Kate.

Your loving Mother.

Margaret nodded when she read the letter.

"The stalking is over," she said, "and dad has won."

"Do you want to go back yet?"

"No, I don't," I said.

Lord Stranmore seemed very disappointed when I said we would have to go back next week. We were walking up and down the Terrace after dinner, and he was smoking a big cigar.

"I shall miss your sister," he said to me, "I shall indeed miss you both, but she has made me quite young again. She looks after me—"

"You have Diana," I suggested.

"Diana is a sweet creature, a very fine character, but as you will probably have noticed, she is almost a nun."

"So you know?" I said, astonished.

"I have known for some months. I saw a letter lying on a chair where Diana had left it. One sentence caught my eye. It was from the Reverend Mother of the Gray Sisters Convent. 'When will you tell your father you wish to be a nun?'—the chapel—her interest in good works—her aloofness from any desire for the society of men, all these things make me think that she is not of this world and that I shall be very lonely later on."

"I am so sorry," I said.

"Margaret has become the companion of all my

rambles, I cannot contemplate losing her, I cannot indeed."

He shook his head and walked away, his hands behind him.

We fixed to go back on the Saturday, it gave us one more week of bliss. Immediately the date was fixed for our departure, Stranmore began to recede, and I felt the new thoughts receding a little with it, and to picture the life we were going back to more vividly.

Margaret didn't show much feeling, but went about chirpy as usual, looking after Stranmore, and sleeping soundly every night, whilst I lay awake pondering on the future. On the last evening, Margaret was rather later than usual coming up to bed. I had already plaited my hair when she came in.

"Where have you been?" I said. "You are generally in bed before me."

She looked at me with a funny little twinkle.

"Can't you guess?"

I knew in a flash.

"He has asked you to marry him?"

"Yes."

"You've said you will?"

"Of course, haven't we talked of it for ages, you and I?"

"I never thought he would really ask you; I treated it just as a sort of joke between us."

"It's come true."

I went up to her.

"I'm not a bit glad," I said.

"Why you said when you first came here, it would be splendid."

"I know I did; this house is so magnificent and we came out of just a hotel. I was impressed, but I don't feel like that now."

"But, dear, we always said if only we had a chance to be solid, we would take it."

"I've changed my mind. Just being solid isn't everything — there's more — there's love, it's the best thing in the world."

She looked at me.

"How do you know?"

"I don't know, I just feel it."

"What makes you feel it? Have you met someone you love? Do you know a man?"

"No. I felt it one day in the chapel, when Diana was playing the organ."

"That first day we went to see the Chapel?"

"Yes."

"That's funny. Are you sure it was that day?"

"Quite — quite sure. I don't know what made me get so certain, so if you do not love Lord Stranmore, and of course you can't, he is too old for you — don't marry him."

"Elizabeth, dear, I am going to marry Lord

Stranmore, he has asked me because he is lonely, and because I am necessary to him. I shall look after him, and he will make me secure for life, so that I can look after you and mother. Dad will come to grief, he must — and I shall have a home for both of you if need be. I'm the managing sort. Believe me this will be quite a happy and pleasant marriage." We kissed each other — a thing we seldom did.

"You're so sensible and sure of yourself, Meg, I expect you will make a success of it."

We talked and talked, and at last put out the candles. I was just settling down to sleep, when Margaret spoke.

"Elizabeth. You remember the day you thought about love and that, in the chapel?"

"Yes."

"Are you quite sure it was the first day, while Diana was playing the organ?"

"Perfectly certain, why?"

"Well, I'll tell you. Because I think it rather interesting. While she was playing, a young man came into the chapel, he stood there about ten minutes listening, and then went. He looked an awful dear. Very tall and fair."

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"I don't know. I don't really know why I told you now, except, just when he was standing behind

you, you couldn't see him of course, you were thinking about love weren't you? Only a coincidence, I suppose, but —"

"What a pity I didn't see him too," I said disappointedly.

. . . . . .

Unlike most prospective in-laws Diana was glad to welcome us as members of her family.

"My father talked to me last night, long after you both had gone to bed. We had it all out about me, and you, Margaret. He was anxious to know what I thought about the difference of age."

"How old is your father, Diana?"

"Fifty, but he looks older, because he has always lived the life of a recluse, bent over his books. He adored my mother, but she died when I was about six years old. She was a great invalid, and he has spent a rather lonely life. Margaret is the one I am wondering about."

"Margaret always knows what she wants," I said. "So I think we need not worry about her. It will be a great God-send for one of us to be settled down."

"So you see," said Diana, joyfully, "the door is open for me to go."

"Must you?" I asked.

"I must," she said, "it is like a strange compelling voice, calling to me all the time, softly, per-

sistently. I can leave everything to Meg, she will look after everything."

"I believe she will, and be so happy and placid and sensible. What pleasure and security you have brought to us, Diana. God bless you."

We left by the twelve-thirty train, they saw us off, and the footman handed in a luncheon basket.

"I shall come up next week, to talk to your father and mother," said Lord Stranmore; "I shall miss you too much to stay up here long alone."

"Now don't forget to have your meals at proper times," admonished Margaret.

"I'll write it down," he said.

Diana stood with her hand on her father's arm. He took off his old gray felt hat and waved it to us. We leaned out in turn, waving until the curve hid them.

"How do you think the parent birds will receive our tremendous news?"

"Mother will call me a clever girl, and be really pleased and happy. Dad will probably blow up with pride, or else look up the Stranmore rent roll, and make a plan about getting some of it. I wonder what's in the luncheon basket?"

We opened it and found some chicken sandwiches, jam tarts, and fruit.

"What was that young man like, who came into the chapel?" I asked.

"Fair," said Meg, "very tall, with a sort of browny-redness on his skin, which made his hair look fairer. I noticed he had a thickish neck."

"We shall never see him again, I suppose?"

"You haven't seen him at all," said Margaret, laughing.

"No," I admitted. "I wonder if he's a neighbor of Stranmore's?"

"If he is," said Meg, "I'll ask him to dinner when you come and stay with us. I think I shall put my hair up to-morrow; you have had yours up a month now."

Kings Cross was full of the noise of incoming and outgoing trains, steam hissings, shouting porters and the rattle of cabs on the stones — a contrast to the sunny little station we left at mid-day. Mother met us in a station 'bus, she looked very smart in a new dust colored dress and pink straw hat.

"How pretty you look, mother."

She was very pleased.

"You girls look well," she said, "and oh, my dears, I think you'll like the new house. We can give your coming out dance there, the drawing-room will hold two or three hundred people comfortably."

"Do we know two or three hundred people?" asked Meg.

"You'd be surprised how many people I know now, dearest. Your father is such a very clever

man and has sold his railway to Mr. Montebello."

"That's it," said Margaret, "I thought he would; hope it's all right."

"Margaret," corrected mother, "how can you speak of your father like that? Of course it's all right; Mr. Montebello will make a large fortune."

"I only meant," said Margaret, "I hope the Montebellos will be all right. That old lady we saw at lunch would die unless she had seventeen courses and two helpings of everything."

"You see," I explained, "dad is what I should call a hopeful financier. He's so optimistic about his own affairs."

"He has been very fortunate this time," said mother. "Do you like this brooch? He bought it for me yesterday."

It was a diamond arrow stabbing the lace jabot she wore.

"Very original, don't you think?"

"And very appropriate," said Margaret.

"Why?"

"Drawing a long bow, you know."

I giggled.

"Don't be irreligious about money," I said.

"I think you two girls are rather silly to-day," said mother, eyeing us suspiciously.

"Now what is your news? Not that you would have very much buried in that Yorkshire village."

"You never know," said Meg mysteriously.

Kate greeted us on our arrival, and was full of news as she unpacked.

"Here's a treat, money like water, new clothes, a house for your mother, jewelry and goodness only knows what all. It's hardly worth unpacking really, as we shall be going in about a week."

We had champagne at dinner, and dad's face was beaming as he sipped the sparkling wine and held it up to the light.

"Good wine," he said, "life giving, exhilarating, the wine of feasts and rejoicings, a heiroglyphic of success. I drink your health, my dears."

"We must all drink each other's," said mother, lifting her glass.

"I'll drink a toast," said Meg suddenly. "Here's to the future Lady Stranmore."

I started and looked at her.

"He's going to marry again then," said mother; "what's she like?"

"Nice sensible girl," said I. "What she lacks in beauty she makes up in good-heartedness."

"Good family?" asks mother.

"No," said Meg.

"Any money?" said dad.

"Now and then," said Meg.

"I don't know what you mean by that," said mother. "How old is she?"

"Very young," said Meg, "about my age."

"Ridiculous," said mother, "what can her people mean by letting her marry that old man?"

"He's only fifty," said Meg.

"What's the girl's name?" said dad.

"Margaret Sutherland," said Meg.

"You — you —" dad dropped his eyeglasses.

Mother leaned over the table, looking quite pale with surprise.

"Me," said Meg.

"Oh, my dear child, you clever child, you sly one, oh, what a sensation, oh, what a position. I must ring up — everyone."

Dad lighted his cigar slowly.

"You're a chip of the old block, Meg. I didn't know you were so enterprising."

"She's a very lucky girl, because he's such a dear."

"Oh, my dear," said mother again, "oh, I am so pleased."

"We've forgotten the toast," said dad. "I give you Lord and Lady Stranmore."

We all drank it solemnly.

"Aren't you envious, Elizabeth?" said mother, up in the sitting room later on, "you're the eldest you know."

"Me jealous of Meg? I'm going to marry for love."

"You mustn't do anything stupid," said mother.

"Is it stupid to marry for love?"

"Generally," said mother, puffing at a tiny Russian cigarette, "all the really lovable young men are so poor."

"Ah, well," said dad, leaning back and putting his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, "you had better copy your wise young sister. I shall enjoy staying at Stranmore; I like the country, it's so peaceful."

"It wouldn't be peaceful long, if you were there, dad," said Margaret.

"Now, now," said mother.

Dad laughed and smoothed his chin.

"Let her talk," he said easily, "she's a good girl and has done well. I wonder now what the Stranmore estates are worth."

"Fifty thousand a year," said Margaret, "and I shall see that they remain at that. Lady Stranmore is not investing in railways, dad."

"Of all the unjust accusations! I was only figuring your rent roll, my good impertinent child."

"Well, good-night, dears," said Margaret, "I'm off to bed, it's been a long day. Before I go I want to tell you a few facts. I am not marrying entirely for ambition. I'm doing it because I arranged to do it a year or two ago."

I nodded as they looked astonished.

"It's true," I said.

"We were very poor and wretched at 183," said Margaret. "Somebody had to arrange something. I'm too fond of Elizabeth, and she is too romantic to do things like that for herself. Our income was precarious. It was up to me, I had an opportunity, lots of people never in their lives have a chance like it. As you say I need not marry him now, because at any rate for the present, there's money, but I don't know how long that money is going to last. In any case I should marry Lord Stranmore; I like him very much. As I told Elizabeth, 'I like that sort of well ordered life'— I'm not a bit poetic or anything — I expect I occurred in one of yours or mother's very sensible moments — because I like to know where I am, and I like other people to know where I am, instead of roaming — that's about all, I think, dears. I'm sorry I've made such a long speech."

She paused a little breathless and flushed. We all looked at her, father puffing away at his cigar, mother figuring her pearls.

"Good-night," she said a little awkwardly, "I'm glad you're glad."

"That's a good girl," said dad when she had gone, "with good feeling and common sense. I hope you'll do as well, Elizabeth."

"Elizabeth will do what she can to make us

all happy, I'm sure," said mother very decidedly.

"I think I'll go up after Meg," I said rather restlessly.

"You two hang together," said dad.

"It's a nice relationship," I said. "Good-night."

CHAPTER VII

IDEALS AND FACTS

The following day Mr. Bernard Chesham came to luncheon. He had made friends with my father at the Club, and became rather a frequent visitor. He knew a great number of people and was a sort of hanger on. A great drawing room favorite, nephew of a rather uninteresting peer, who never saw him from year's end to another, but who was referred to very frequently by Bernard—he would not for the world be seen in Bond Street at the wrong time in the wrong clothes — he was a member of the Bachelor's Club, and a friend of that elderly bachelor Mr. Augustus Vernon — so well known in London society. This friendship alone, they both felt, gave each of them a sort of cachet — they did not particularly care for each other, but used each other for reference. Bernard had great ideas of entertaining but was not really well enough off to do so. He therefore made use of those with money who did not know many people and took large parties out at their expense. If Bernard and Augustus Vernon were both at a party, you could be quite sure that the party would be the right one. They

were so anxious to be everywhere, that "mattered" to the Press — they had been known to look in at four weddings in one day, where they looked out for the lion of the occasion and endeavored to be seen conversing with him or her for a few brief moments. Bernard played the piano tolerably, affected a post impressionist manner, and had a very ultra-artistic flat in Sloane Street where black walls and gold furniture were the predominant features.

All these facts I learned from mother before he came, and when I met him, I thought he looked every bit of it.

"He has taken a fancy to me," said mother, "and is going to bring some of his amusing friends to meet me."

"Any ulterior motive for this society guide business?" asked Margaret.

"Hush, certainly not. He likes us and wishes us to have a good time. He runs in and out and does what he likes and he gives very cheery parties."

"I don't think I shall like him," I said.

But I found he was very amiable and anxious to be pleasant, he seemed very interested in all our plans, and as if he had known us for years.

"Those sort of young men," observed Margaret, "are a little dangerous I think."

"Dear me," said mother, "do you mean you would fall in love with him?"

"No, I don't, but he's like a Persian cat, all soft fur, with frightfully long claws hidden away somewhere."

He was very amusing in a way, and said funny sharp things about people, and read all the new books, and knew the latest gossip about everyone — he was enchanted at Margaret's engagement, and told mother to be sure and announce it as soon as possible.

"In fact, I could run around with it myself, if you write it out."

Dad had already heard from Lord Stranmore, formally asking his consent to the engagement, and saying that he was coming up to London on Thursday, and would call upon us on his arrival.

"The diamonds, my dear," said Bernard to mother, "have you seen them?"

"I haven't," said Meg. "I didn't know there were any diamonds."

"Unworldly thing," said Bernard playfully, "there are masses of them, and ropes of pearls. You must invite us all to stay at Stranmore. I can bring a jolly party and we'll have the greatest jinks."

"Will he?" said Margaret after to me, "I don't like him, and I don't like the word jinks, and I don't like his waving hands."

"I love to watch him, Meg, we've never met his sort before. He's a curiosity. Sometimes it's

almost like talking to a school-girl, then again, he's like a very worldly old man, and I have heard him talking to dad in quite a business-like way."

"Hm! Take a very clever person to get over him," said Margaret, "with all his skippings and gambolings; he has an eye to the main chance."

There was so much to see to, and so many fresh interests, that the ideal thoughts and aspirations born at Diana's home seemed very far and away and confused. It was as if a mist had come up, and clouded a lovely view of stretching sun-flecked country. I could only see the objects near to me, and as they were all very material ones, no wonder more aesthetic cravings were obscured for a time.

The day before we left the Metropole, we all dined with Bernard Chesham. When we arrived, it was only just beginning to grow dusk. The flat was very small, but full of artistic things. The hall rather dim, with a silver sanctuary lamp hanging in front of a Russian Ikon, long low divans, with every colored cushion.

"Not unlike the fortune teller's flat, only cleaner and richer," said Margaret.

The drawing room where we went after we had removed our cloaks, had orange walls, black carpet and black satin chairs, with emerald green cushions, and a sort of large bed with no railings, against the wall in the middle, covered with an orange satin

cover, and instead of cushions, a long green bolster thing at the top. A very pretty, thin woman with red hair, was sitting on this when we got in, smoking a scented cigarette in a jade holder.

"And so, my dear Bernard," she was saying, in a languid voice, "we didn't go to bed at all. Jimmy Birch got out his car, and we all tootled off to Covent Garden, in our dancing rags, and bought strawberries and roses and had them for breakfast at Queenie's house in Curzon Street."

"Just up the village," said Bernard, "I know. How I should loathe roses for breakfast."

"Buffoon!" laughed the pretty lady.

And Bernard spied us.

"Oh, how do you all do? May I introduce you to Lady Angela Percival. Mrs. Sutherland, Mr. Sutherland, Elizabeth and Margaret, the lucky young lady who is to marry Stranmore."

"Old book worm Stranmore?" said Lady Angela, "you poor dear, but I suppose he's quite devoted, and you can do as you like."

"We'll see to that," said Bernard, "I shall take up a party to cheer the lonely lady shut up in the haunted castle. Ah, there you are, Aubrey, and Mr. Vernon. Now we're all here."

There entered a young man, rather like our host, only dark, with a tired manner and sleepy brown eyes, a white gardenia in his buttonhole, and behind

him, the famous Augustus Vernon peering short-sightedly, conscious of the luster he added to the party.

"I've just come from the Duchess of Wold's reception," he said, giving two fingers to Lady Angela, "such a crush. The Prince was there, you know."

"I suppose the music was wonderful," said Lady Angela, "Melba was going to sing."

"I didn't hear," said the ancient snob, "I was talking to the Prince."

"Very rude of you," said Lady Angela, "and much more rude of the Prince, who ought to have known better."

"May I introduce Mr. Brownlow?" said our host, bringing up the sleepy eyed young man, who smiled at us wanly, and turned away.

"That young man must be walking in his sleep," said Margaret, "if awake he ought to have better manners."

The butler, an Italian boy, with curly dark hair and observant eyes, came in bearing a tray of small glasses, containing a bright pink liquid.

"This is my special cocktail," said Bernard, jumping up. "Yours, Mrs. Sutherland — dear Angela, you, with my love —"

He picked the glasses off the tray, and handed them to each of us, as if there was something very special in them. Then raising his own glass he said,

"We will drink to the health of the future bride."

And they all clinked glasses and drank. I heard Lady Angela whisper in answer to a question of the sleepy young man, "That girl will be Lady Stranmore."

And he immediately became unsleepy and moved over towards Margaret.

"I know your future relation," said he, "Diana Wetherby. She's very dévote, isn't she? Going into a monastery or something."

"She's going to be a nun," I joined in.

"Then you'll have the field," said Mr. Brownlow, "and can make hay up there, without a religious wet blanket to stop you."

"Diana is not a wet blanket," said Margaret loyally, "she's been our friend ever since we were at school."

I could not bear this unpleasant young man to speak in that sneering way of our dear Diana, who had done so much for us. It was as if a man with rather dirty hands, was fingering a piece of exquisite white brocade.

"Dinner is served," said the Italian butler.

And we all went in.

The table looked very artistic, round and shiny, with orange silk mats and table center, a golden bowl with wax oranges in it, and two golden pigeons standing each side; four gilt candlesticks shaded

with orange made the light soft and mellow. We had soup out of gold china cups, and all sorts of beautifully cooked things after. There were very graceful long stemmed wine glasses with gold flowers on them, and lots of little gold dishes with cherries and violets and salted almonds and chocolates. Everyone laughed and talked in a gay, flippant way, and clinked their glasses, and drank toasts and conversed of actresses, art, music, and said numbers of witty, rather spiteful things about other friends.

Mr. Brownlow devoted himself to Meg.

"I sing," he said, "I should make an awfully helpful guest up at Stranmore, and I could amuse you after dinner with little mad, vague melodies."

"We love him when he sings," said Lady Angela.

"But I have to keep on singing," said he, sipping his wine.

"We'll make you dance after dinner, Angela," said Bernard, "everyone must do something. We'll have a tiny variety show just for ourselves — how do you like my orange efforts — rather twee aren't they? I tried to get some orange blossom, but failed, just in honor of the bride to be."

"People make rather a fuss about other people getting married," said Margaret, "yet everyone gets married."

"We don't all marry wealthy peers," said Lady

Angela, "and so you see we are fussing you up, because we want to come and stay with you, and be given a good time, and make you give dances for us. We will teach you how to live."

"We'll come and stamp our purple personalities on the village," said Bernard.

"I daresay I can get Lord and Lady Badminton, and a few choice spirits to come up," said Augustus Vernon patronizingly. "Your parties will make quite a sensation."

"If I don't like the people, and I don't know them, I expect I should make the sensation. I don't know Lord and Lady Badminton, perhaps I shouldn't like them?"

"Not like them?" said Augustus Vernon. "Do you know they are very, very rich?"

"We know some rich people, too," said Meg, "and I don't like them."

"You must give some dances," said Mr. Brownlow.

"Yes?" said Margaret.

"Mr. Vernon loves dances," went on Brownlow.

Margaret turned to Augustus Vernon.

"Do you dance yourself still?" she asked.

The guests shouted with mirth.

"No, but he's awfully good at sitting out," said Bernard. "You try him."

"And he receives your guests for you and takes

all the tiaras down to supper, which saves you no end of trouble," whispered Lady Angela.

And Mr. Vernon, not the least offended with Margaret for her frankness, talked to her quite amiably.

Bernard made his own coffee, in a Turkish copper saucepan and put in orange flower water. The cups were delicate yellow china ones in gold stands, and the coffee delicious.

"Now for the *piéce de resistance.* Gino, bring the liqueur."

And little crystal glasses were brought, filled with white liqueur with little golden flecks floating about in it.

"Aren't I clever to get such a pretty drink?" said Bernard.

"It tastes of nothing but brilliantine, Bernard," said Lady Angela.

"But it looks so divine," said he, "nobody ever has it."

"I can quite understand that," said Lady Angela. "I don't like it."

Dad got on very well with Lady Angela. I heard scraps of conversation.

"You rich men are so powerful," said she, lifting her glass to him.

And a little later.

"Well, come and see me, I know heaps about

business and could be very useful to you probably."

"Come to my party next week," said Augustus Vernon to mother; "all sorts of charming people are coming. Bring your girls. I like the eldest one. I'll invite Lord Sandling to meet her. Bring her, bring her, you'll enjoy yourselves."

After dinner, Lady Angela danced to us, Bernard played, and Mr. Brownlow sang something about a Fawn and a Dryad. I used to think in the woods at Stranmore that I heard the Dryads' voices and the pipes of Fawns, but to-night they did not seem so real. I could not imagine anything sylvan in that rather worldly atmosphere. They themselves thought they were very aesthetic and refined, but they were not. They did not mean one word they said, and they did not really like each other very much.

We did some table turning after the music, and it was twelve o'clock before we went to get our wraps. Mother was very talkative going home. Very much interested in life from a perfectly outside point of piew, she was always ready to be amused at a party — she took what was offered with a cheerful spirit, and was rather inclined to believe what people told her, and certainly inclined to like people if they gave her a good time.

"What delightful people! Such a well-appointed flat. Everything ran on oiled wheels — What a

good chef he must have. Augustus Vernon is an influential man, I am glad he took a fancy to you two girls. I believe he has very nice parties."

"I don't like him," I said, "he drops his h's; I tripped over two or three as I came out."

"Nonsense," said mother, "he is not very young any more, and doesn't talk quite as distinctly as you do."

"I don't really think any of them are nice," said Margaret, "they seem to adore everyone in the room, and loathe all the people outside."

"I wonder what they're saying about us now," I said, "I expect they're wondering who we are, how you got your money, and how useful you are likely to be to them."

"Well," said dad, leaning back in the corner of the brougham, "I'm wondering precisely the same about them."

. . . . . .

As soon as we were settled in the new house, Lord Stranmore came to see dad, who, when he had gone out to luncheon with Margaret, told us that the settlements were very handsome indeed.

"He wishes to marry as soon as Margaret can be persuaded to settle the day, and I see no reason for delay. An alliance with his family will be very useful for your future."

"How you work that poor dear word, dad."

"What word?"

"Useful."

"Oh," he patted my shoulder, "you can afford to be a little unworldly now, my dear, you will probably be a catch yourself, if all I hope comes true."

Arrangements were made with Bernard's assistance to give a house warming party and coming-out dance in one. Mother and Bernard were in their element. They sat writing out lists of people who would bring parties.

"But we shan't know any of them," I expostulated.

"They all want to meet you," said Bernard.

"They want to meet some chicken and champagne, much more than us," said Margaret.

"The true spirit of hospitality, isn't it?" I said.

"Naughty 'sings," said Bernard gaily, "if mummy and I didn't look after your interests, we should have you doing all sorts of quixotic things. Elizabeth would probably marry a soldier with twopence a year and be forever hidden in obscurity."

"If I fall in love with a soldier, I shall marry him," I said. "I think soldiers very romantic."

"So do a lot of other people," said Bernard sagely, "until they are married to one."

. . . . . .

While Lord Stranmore was taking out his be-

loved Meg, I used to go for lonely rambles in Kensington Gardens, remote from the fashionable part of Hyde Park, where the *grand monde* discussed each other's clothes and pasts and incomes. It appealed to me. Since Peter Pan had come, there was a brooding spirit abroad which drew me day by day in high summer near the statue to watch the water sparkling in the sunlight. Sometimes children came and stood looking at the statue, discussing the carved creatures hidden in the pedestal. One day a charming child walked with his nurse. A boy of eight or so with thoughtful eyes, and thick short curls. He stood looking at Peter Pan awhile.

"Was he ever alive?" he asked his nurse, pointing to the statue.

"No," said the nurse, "it's only a story."

"I'm sorry," said the boy regretfully, "it's like Santa Claus, I suppose?"

"Yes," said the nurse, "all nonsense."

She sat down and began to crochet some lace. The boy wandered away by himself. I got up and followed and spoke to him.

"Nurses don't know everything," I said softly, "they don't even believe in fairies."

He turned and regarded me gravely.

"Do you?" said he.

"Of course I do," said I, "there are fairies, there is a Peter Pan, Santa Claus does

come, no matter what they may say to you."

"It would be a relief," said the child, "it leaves you nothing to wonder about, when people say there's no anything."

"Peter Pan," I said, "is the spirit of childhood. He is always about. Everything you see, the sunbeams dancing on the lake, or the dew glittering on the grass, Peter Pan makes you think it's diamonds. Haven't you thought the dew like diamonds?"

"Of course I have."

"Peter Pan gets into your mind, and shows you the beautiful things of the world."

"It's a great relief," said the little boy again, "I hope I shall see you again. Who are you?"

"Just a disciple of the fairies," said I.

"We always come here on fine mornings," he said eagerly, "do come again. My name's Michael Stone, what's yours?"

"Elizabeth Sutherland," I said. "Michael is a nice name. He was the head of all the angels. The ones that come singing on Christmas night."

"They do come singing then on Christmas night; I knew they did, but nurse said it was the choir boys singing in the street."

"I'm not so sure."

"I like you, you talk little thoughts," said Michael. "I shall look forward to next time."

We shook hands solemnly. I walked away, then

looking back I saw him staring after me. He took off his cap and waved it. I blew a kiss. I felt elated and joyous. It is a fine thing to give back ideals, even if you only give them back to a little boy of eight years old.

Why should the nurse have disturbed his thoughts? I tried to wash away the lovely visions of a little child. That quick imagination which sees a little face in every pansy, and hears the tinkle of the lily bells, which peoples the woods with elfin folk, and listens to the mermaids' voices in the sea-shells. Yet in a larger sense I knew that my own father was tearing the veil of youthful idealism from my eyes, and urging me to follow the surging crowd, who ran after pleasure, riches and material joys. Had he not said to me, as the nurse said to the child, "There are no ideals, only facts, facts, facts."

Numbers of people called upon us or were brought by Bernard. Some of them were nice, others not at all. Invitations flowed in by every post, and mother accepted as many as she could, revelling in the life of luxury and all her pretty clothes. I was taken out and about. I wondered why people seem to dislike each other when they speak of each other, but always herd together in large crowds. I met an elderly man at one of these parties. I was wedged in a corner and couldn't move one way or the other.

"We ought to be in the fresh air," said a voice.

I turned and saw a tall soldierly man smiling down on me.

"We ought," I said, "but I can't move."

"I'll pilot you out, when I can," he said, "if you will allow me. My sister is giving this party, so I think there is no harm in my giving you some tea."

We managed to get out of the densest part, and moved into the tea room, where people were thinning out, as there was music in the drawing-room.

"I am here for my sins," he said, "just once a year I visit my sister who is a worldling of the deepest dye. I say how do you do, and am swept away from her for the rest of the afternoon. You are Miss Sutherland, and if you will honor me I should like to be friends. I know Stranmore, who is to marry your sister."

"I'm very fond of him," I said, "any friend of his is a friend of mine."

"My name is Samson — General — Royal Engineers — at your service."

"I'm glad you got me out of that," I said, sipping iced coffee, and nodding towards the door, where we could see the crowd jostling each other.

"I had been watching you for some time."

"It's rather thrilling being watched when you don't know it," I said, smiling at him.

"I could see you were not enjoying yourself."

"Rather ungrateful of me, as your sister is giving the party."

"She shouldn't give such a large party," said he, laughing.

"One goes out a good bit to please parents," I said. "I don't know why they like it so much."

"It's part of the routine, I suppose?" he suggested, "and personalities are sometimes engrossing."

"That's one of the reasons why I come," I said, "because I much prefer to walk in Kensington Gardens. I've got a pal there."

"And so you go a-wooing by the water lilies."

"If one can go wooing with a little boy of eight."

"Oh," said he, "I know how to amuse people of that age. You fish for minnows in the Round Pond."

"It's not done in the best circles," I remonstrated.

"Nevertheless will you come a-fishing, and bring your little friend some morning?"

"I have a rendezvous to-morrow morning with Michael; will you come?"

"With pleasure. This is a case where I must put off till to-morrow what we cannot do to-day."

I looked at him in a very friendly way.

"I'm glad I came to this party," I said.

I liked General Samson's ideas, and he

seemed to understand my point of view, too."

"Who was that?" asked mother as we drove from the house, leaving the General hat in hand in the door-way.

"Our hostess's brother," I said, "General Samson. I'm going to walk with him in Kensington Gardens to-morrow morning."

"Fine looking old man," said mother, "but why did you hide yourself all the afternoon. I wanted to introduce you to Mrs. Jarrette, immensely wealthy, and her son. He will inherit about fifteen thousand a year. They made their money in soap or something."

"If she is the lady with the loud voice, I saw, I mean heard, talking to you, I don't think I want to meet her."

"She is anxious for her boy to meet you, and I have accepted an invitation to luncheon on Thursday."

"Have you met the boy?"

"Yes, dear."

"What's he like?"

"Well, dear, he is like —"

"Adonis," I suggested.

"No, dear, not quite. He wears pince-nez, and is thin and tall, oh, quite tall."

"Voice anything like his mother's?"

"Not at all. He has a very quiet voice in-

deed — yes — quite a soft voice if anything."

I nodded at her.

"In fact," I said, "he looks like most young men look who are going to have lots of money. Don't worry," as she looked a little shocked, "I'll go to lunch."

"You might as well meet him," said mother, "we can walk in the Park and go on after. They have a magnificent house almost like a museum and a unique collection of curios."

"I hope the curiosities will all be in the museum and not at the party," I said.

Margaret showed me the Stranmore pearl necklace that night, which he had given to her.

"It belonged to all the Ladies Stranmore; isn't it beautiful?"

"I am glad they are yours," I said, "you deserve to have lovely things, you are always so sweet. Women adore jewels, don't they?"

I fingered the milky rope, admiring them.

"Yes," said Meg, "it's supposed to be a distinction to have them, isn't it?"

"Lots of women do almost anything to get pearls and diamonds."

"I wouldn't do anything — odd — to get them, would you?"

I looked at her.

"Odd," I said.

"There are very odd things in the world, I can't help thinking," said Meg in a quiet little voice.

"Things you get sort of sure of, that seem impossible at first. What made you first think of that?"

"Oh, I don't know, children seem to be so mysterious, and kittens being not one night, and kittens in the morning, and Mabel running away, do you remember, because of something very awful that had happened — and people being beastly about her, and I begin to think it's the odd — something of the world."

"I believe it's a very wonderful something, and I'm sure if we think about it nicely, we shall not be too surprised or worried."

"I think you'd better ask Diana," said Margaret.

"I think I will," I said.

We went down to dinner together arm in arm, and Meg made Lord Stranmore fasten the pearls 'round her neck. Diana had come, and when the men were smoking over their port, I drew Diana on one side.

"I want to ask you something."

"Yes," said Diana.

Meg had gone to the piano and was playing softly, while mother read *The Tatler*.

"Meg and I began to realize that there is a queer, and perhaps beautiful, but certainly mysterious

something about this world that we ought to know," I began.

"Yes," said Diana, turning her clear dark eyes on me.

"If you know how to, will you tell me?"

"There is not much to tell," said Diana simply. "There is, just as you say, a something mysterious and often beautiful, I hope it may be beautiful for you."

"Please explain, if you will, Diana. Both Meg and I hate to feel muddled."

She sat looking out away from me, in a big easy chair, leaning her head on her hand, whilst I perched at her feet on a cushioned stool.

"You know, darling, what a mosaic picture is? You see them on the walls of a cathedral sometimes, they represent stories out of scripture, or the figure of a saint or an angel."

"I know," I said, "a mosaic picture is made up of tiny pieces of colored glass and metal."

"Yes, that's right, and if one of the little pieces of glass is missing, the picture is not complete."

"Of course not," I said.

"That is almost all," said Diana gently, "when people marry, they are piecing together a most glorious mosaic, and one cannot finish the design without the other. But when the design is complete, the picture is not that of a saint or of an angel,

but instead the picture of a little child." . . .

I had arranged to meet the General near Kensington Palace, and at eleven o'clock precisely he was there.

"You didn't forget then?" he said, "I have been feeling very nervous and wondering if you would forget to come."

"I have been looking forward to it," I said. "Let us go and find Michael."

The sun shone, the sky was bright blue, an aeroplane high up, gleamed like a silver dragon fly. We walked towards Peter Pan's statue, and I saw a small upright little figure standing there. I called out, "Coo-ee!"

He came running towards us.

"I've brought a friend," I said.

"A Peter Pan man?" said Michael.

"I hope so," said the General, "may I join the band?"

"Do you believe in fairies?" asked Michael.

"I do."

"And mermaids?"

"Yes."

"And Peace and Goodwill angels?"

"Certainly."

"Then we're all right," said Michael; "what shall we do?"

"Shall we try to catch some minnows in the

Round Pond?" suggested the General simply.

"Could we, oh, could we, Mrs. Pan?"

The General was undoing a parcel.

"I've brought all the necessary implements," he said.

He put together a sort of butterfly net, and stick, and produced a glass jar. "Who could refuse to come a-fishing?" said he.

We invited Nannie, too, but she looked at us with some contempt.

"He'll be all right with you, Miss; perhaps you'd like to bring him back yourself at half-past twelve."

Much relieved we left her to her crochet, and walked briskly, till the Round Pond lay at our feet reflecting the trees and sky. A happy band of children, in rags and tatters, was gathered there, sailing ships of cork and wood with masts of match-wood. There they bobbed, the tiny craft, complete yachts and men-of-war in the imagination of their scrubby little proprietors — The air was full of laughter, high children's voices and shuffling feet, a little breeze ruffled the waters — We caught six minnows, tiny darting streaks of silver, and became the center of an admiring group of yachtsmen, as we dropped them into the jam jar.

"They don't live," asserted a small urchin in a darned red jersey and brown knickers, three sizes too large for him.

"Don't they?" said Michael.

"No," said the sage. "I took up minnow fishing at one time — caught a lot, too — but blimey if they didn't die in the night."

"How sad," said Michael, "perhaps they couldn't breathe in the small jar, so many of them."

The adviser laughed in a superior way.

"Breave," he said, "well upon my sammy, breave! They're fishes."

"Supposing I keep one," said Michael.

"Keep two," said I, "they might be fond of each other."

"Well I've told you what will 'appen if you do," said our interfering friend of the brown trousers.

"On our own heads be it," said the General, "we accept the responsibility."

We were now becoming the objects of rather too much attention and discussion, so we left the motley gathering, and made our way down a leafy path, while the General produced from his pockets some chocolates.

"You have a knack of doing the right thing," I said.

"I'm glad you found him," said Michael, eating a large almond.

We saw him back to his home at Lancaster Gate. He pointed out his house to the General.

"It's a big house," said Michael, "for a little boy

like me, but I don't feel so lonely as I did before I knew her. I used to feel awfully old at one time."

I swept him up and kissed him.

"We must meet again as soon as possible," I said, as Michael disappeared through the door opened by a bishop-like butler.

"I like talking to children," I said as we were walking away, "they are so frank."

"You seemed about Michael's age when you were with him catching minnows."

"I think an awful lot when I'm not with him," I said, "quite grown-up thoughts — rather worldly ones I'm afraid."

"Do you?" said the General. "Such as —"

"Oh, let me see, how untruthful, and insincere people are — How nice one can look if one has lots of money and pretty clothes — That I may perhaps have to marry someone rich and unpleasant because my father knows better than me about my own happiness."

"Does he?" said the General.

"He thinks he does. I have a strain of ambition in me. I sometimes feel I would like to make this snobbish old world sit up and take notice of me, in a pleasant way of course."

"You are passing through aspiration lane," he said, "a very flowery one. The leaves hang so low, one cannot see the end of it. Fame might be stand-

ing at the other end, holding a crown of laurels, but unfortunately, to very few is given the privilege of seeing her."

"Don't you think it a good thing to make a bouquet of the stars?"

He caught my meaning.

"Remember," he said, "you might get burnt if you go too near a star — Ambition has destroyed more people than it has made; you should be thinking of love at your age."

"I have been," I said, "I keep on thinking and thinking of love, and of how beautiful it would be, to be loved. And then some words of dad ring in my ears. 'Elizabeth is clever, she has gifts, we must not let them be hidden under the bushel of a mediocre marriage.' I forget the stars, and the voices, and remember only that we once lived in apartments, which smelt of gas, and I want to avoid poverty and mediocrity badly — so you see what a chaotic mind I have, and how anxious I am to go out with Michael, and look into his mind. Just as a man, who has been in a stuffy office all day long, longs to go, hat off, and stand on a breezy upland, and let the wind ruffle his hair."

"You make little cameo pictures when you speak," he said, "you shall talk to me as much as you like. I once had a history, a romance — some day I shall tell you of it. And now I must take you

back to your home in a cab, you've walked far enough."

We became great friends, he had a fund of knowledge of books, of art and of music. He knew all the interesting places of London — old London — secret London, not the center of the noisy fashion, but the picturesque hidden spots that no one dreamed of.

I saw Turner's London, artistic Chelsea, with its narrow streets and low creeper-hung houses, its peeping studios, and secluded churches — the long deserted Embankment — the old Herb Garden and the flagged gardens of Cheyne Walk — the misty bridges, slow moving barges and gorgeous sunsets.

. . . . . .

Then up the hill to Hampstead Heath, where from the Pond bank we could see the etherealized city at our feet — through Church Row with its neat balconied houses and green doors — out of which at any moment might have appeared a crinolined beauty of by-gone days, walking daintily up the street to meet her adoring swain, who in white beaver hat, and stock, colored coat and green trousers waited to conduct her for a promenade. On our way home down the hill, when the days were drawing in, we could almost hear the muffin man ringing his bell as he passed from street to street.

Sometimes we lunched in the center of Hyde

Park, eating an omelette and fruit salad under a green umbrella tent. Here the General would smoke his pipe, and watch me with his kindly eyes, and listen to all I had to say in the varied moods of my awakening, while the sparrows chirped and fluttered about us, picking up the crumbs, and the hum of traffic was like the distant sea. Very often Meg would join us, and Stranmore, and the two men talked of old, and reminisced of a different day than ours.

"It is strange that the two men we both like best at present are much older than we are," said Margaret.

The General and Stranmore walked on together — We had been lunching under the trees and were now strolling over the grass towards the Serpentine.

"I'm getting rather anxious about you. The General is fond of you, but we can't both marry people of that age, can we?"

"I don't want to marry the General, Meg, I assure you. He is very clever, and takes great pleasure in my society, but I don't feel that way. He's in love with my mind, I amuse him. He had a love affair once, he would never look at another woman. She died, you know."

"I see," said Meg, "it's just as well for him. Do you know that Stranmore wants

me to marry him next month — October — "

"So soon?"

She put her arm through mine.

"It will be really better," she said, "for then you can come and stay with me."

Though I slipped away as often as I could, between the parties and gaieties, and wandered 'round London with my good old friend, I felt a sort of net closing in on me. I had met Sydney Jarrette, who liked me more than was pleasant, and ran about after me — He called most days to take mother and me out to lunch, and as dad was not pleased when I refused to go, I often went for it was easier to do that than have a long, tiring argument because I didn't.

"What's wrong with him?" said dad.

"Everything," I said, "his short-sighted peerings, and long thin legs, his stooping shoulders and narrow chest."

"He's got a very substantial banking account."

"He's got a very ephemeral brain."

"He has some quite nice friends, young Lord Ranworth —"

"He lent Ranworth two hundred, and he can't pay him back at present."

Dad looked annoyed.

"You are very critical."

"I don't like his mother."

"She is very good-natured."

"She has a very loud voice, and we ate from gold plate when mother and I lunched there. It set my teeth on edge."

"She meant to do you honor."

"Gold plate is very squeaky — We never have it at Diana's at lunch time."

"You might be very thankful to have an opportunity of possessing that gold plate. You could twist young Jarrette around your finger in company with some very magnificent rings. My good girl, when you refuse to consider such an offer, you don't know what you're talking about."

"*You* know what you're talking about," I reminded him, "and you are now advising me well."

"Ridiculous, I'm advising you to make a comfortable and luxurious home for yourself, with horses, carriages, fine clothes, and the best wine and food."

"You always think of the body, not the mind."

"You wouldn't bother about your mind, if you were hungry," said dad.

"My mind would work for my body and not wait for an ugly boring person to give it things — I think the mind is important —"

"The brain is important," said dad, "for a man at any rate."

"I think the soul is important. Your body won't

live for ever and you coddle it to death; your soul will live through eternity, and you don't care a pin about it."

"You are neurotic; make young Jarrette take you out, you'll soon get to like him."

"He gets on my nerves."

"You shouldn't have any nerves at your age."

"I didn't know I had till he got on them."

He got up, flicked the ash from his cigar and went out of the room.

CHAPTER VIII

MARGARET'S WEDDING

Margaret's wedding day grew near and our days were taken up with dressmakers and milliners, and our evenings with writing invitations, assisted by Bernard Chesham.

"You must have thousands of people, and presents, and press notices — It will be the event of the season."

The week before the wedding we were to give our dance.

"Because you can invite heaps of people you've forgotten from there. Vernon will bring dozens."

Mother looked very pretty in the midst of all this excitement, and with the burden of poverty lifted from her shoulders, she seemed years younger; she designed some charming dresses for Margaret, and both our dance dresses. She had exquisite taste. When I threw my coat down in a heap on a chair she immediately picked it up and reproached me.

"Never treat your clothes roughly, Elizabeth, they are very valuable assets, and they are meant to be hung, or folded, or put away in lavender and tissue paper, not used as a hearthrug."

The auspicious evening arrived. There were to be two bands, one in the ballroom, and one in the supper room, a wonderful supper, and if the dance lasted, a sort of grilled bacon meal at dawn.

"Which will be rather unbecoming to the Dowagers," said Bernard; "however, let us hope only choice and particular spirits will remain, and the more heavy will go early."

The house was a bower of roses, every corner a mass of them, pink, red and yellow, with festoons of crimson ramblers and trails of smilax. It was a gorgeous sight.

"This is what money brings," said dad, walking proudly through the rooms, just before the guests were expected, and when the last touches were being given to the supper table. "The only soul you need consider to-night is *sole in aspic.*"

"Yes," I said, "very much in aspic, if it's something cold and covered up."

He eyed me critically.

"You look very well, I like the simple white Greek effect, and the lilies; your mother has very good taste."

Meg came in, also in a white dress, tulle and tiny daisies—"You young ladies make me feel very glad I made a little money."

We all three walked arm in arm up and down the ball room feeling very elated and excited.

Mother's dress of palest maize and orchids, with a mauve tulle scarf, was also approved by dad.

"You're more lenient with your old hubby now-a-days," he said.

"Ah, well," said she, smiling, "when you are good, you're very, very good and when you are bad you are horrid. Just now I'm in my element for I adore pretty clothes, and entertaining people, even if they don't care much for us, its gay and cheery."

The guests came in by twos and threes, and later in crowds. Many well known people brought parties, and soon the flower-decked rooms were full of a laughing, chattering throng. People we had never seen before in our lives flitted past us in smiling groups, and ate ices and drank champagne, and grew merry, and noisy, and seemed to be having the best of good times. I danced with several young men introduced by Bernard and Angela, and once I sat out with Mr. Augustus Vernon, and listened to his accounts of all the Peers he knew, I danced with Sydney Jarrette who danced extremely badly, and when we sat out, in one of the rose tree corners, he asked me to kiss him.

"Why?" I said.

He looked surprised.

"Why, because I want to."

"I should often like to take a pearl necklace out

of a jeweler's window instead of passing by."

"That's nothing to do with it."

"It is, we can't all do what we want, you're wanting to kiss me is no reason why I should let you."

"I'm so awfully fond of you."

"I'm not fond of you."

"Your people want you to be. Look here, I tell you I want to kiss you."

"I haven't begun kissing people yet and I shouldn't care to begin with you."

"I say, you're rather rude to a fellow."

"You don't suggest to me that kissing is a bit nice."

"It is though."

"I never have thought I should care for kissing, and I won't kiss you."

I got up and went out into the ballroom, to find my other partner. He followed sulkily, and I saw him standing in the doorway when I was dancing with the General, looking like a gloomy secretary bird, with a toot of hair standing up at the back of his head, blown up by an electric fan on the wall near him.

"It wouldn't do, would it?" I said to the General as we walked down the room. His eyes followed mine, and lighted on the rather ridiculous figure.

"It would not," he said, "I hope you will be firm."

"If you keep me amused, and take me out, I shall weather the storm," I said laughing, "it's not only a storm in a tea cup remember, it's in every cup, and plate, and glass, at every meal."

"Meals are a trap, as someone said, family meals at any rate," the General remarked, "that's why I like meals in the Park, where the only trap is one for sunbeams."

"I hope Meg will be happy," I said.

"I believe her temperament is suited to the life he will give her. Yours would not be."

"No?" I inquired.

"No, no," he said, "you are a very exceptional creature, and will have an exceptional fate."

"It sounds enchanting," I said, "you always stimulate me, you kind friend. You believe in me and sympathize with my ideals. Even when I lose Diana, and she will soon be absorbed by her nuns, I shall still have your friendship."

"Some day I hope you will have the privilege of meeting a younger, and more romantic companion, and you will love as I once did. There is nothing in the world to equal it."

"Perhaps I shall never meet anyone to love," I said ruefully.

"You were cut out for a great romance."

"Thank you, that is an armour of defence against the Jarrette attacks."

Voices on the other side of the doorway attracted our attention. We couldn't help hearing what was said.

"Which is our host?"

"Good looking pompous chap, with an eyeglass. Made pots of money out of the railways."

"For the Lord's sake point him out to me. I feel such a rotter eating and drinking this good champagne provided by someone I've never met."

"My dear fellow, you're too jolly particular. Let's go and drink his health, and that will salve your conscience."

"There," I said, as the voices trailed away, "doesn't that serve us right. One of those young men was rather nice. I'm going to trace them to the supper room, to have a little chat."

"Would you?" said the General, "do you think you would recognize them?"

"Quite easily," I said. "I know their voices and they will both be sitting together."

"I'd better go and find my other partner," said the General, "I'll just take you along, and leave you to frighten them to death. I daren't think what you will say, because I never really know what you're going to do next."

I laughed at him, and when we got to the supper room I saw two young men at a little table.

"There they are," I said, "now you can go."

I walked over.

"I hope you are enjoying yourselves," I said.

"Er —"

They both got up.

"Er-yes-er thanks very much."

"I am Elizabeth Sutherland; my father and mother are giving the dance to-night. You know my father of course?"

"Rather-er-yes," said the youngest looking at his friend.

"I don't know your father, but I would like to," said the other, "it's very difficult for any guest in these days, to find his host. One gets invited with a party, to go to another party, and old Mr. Augustus Vernon nearly always stands to receive, so what's anyone to do? Won't you join us, and give us the pleasure of your society please, Miss Sutherland?"

"Thank you, very much," I said sitting down.

They got me chicken and ham, and quail and strawberries and cream and were most attentive. We became very friendly indeed.

"Your father must be a topping good sort, if he's anything like you," said the frank one.

They told me their names, Jack Stephens Carr and Captain Bethune, cavalry officers, and very true to type, cheery, not over brainy, good sportsmen. We got on famously. Presently dad strolled in.

I beckoned him to come over to our table.

"Let me introduce Mr. Stephens Carr and Captain Bethune, dad," I said.

They got up.

"Thanks for a very good supper, sir," said young Bethune, "and some of the best champagne we've tasted this year."

"An important item," said dad, "makes a party go, don't you think?"

"Made us stay, sir," said young Bethune.

I got up.

"I'll go with you," I said. "Au revoir, I enjoyed myself very much with you both."

"Handsome young men," said dad, as we moved off, "who did you say they were?"

"Soldiers," said I. "Defenders of the Empire."

"I see," said dad, "probably penniless young subalterns, up to their ears in debt, I daresay. Where is Sydney Jarrette?"

"I don't know, I have been dancing with him."

"That's right, make a fuss with him."

"He asked me to kiss him when we were sitting out."

Dad smiled.

"Young rascal, I hope you didn't."

"Naturally I didn't."

"He's got some spirit."

"He must have had," I said, "and some cham-

pagne which spurred him on, I think."

I was introduced by Lady Angela to a good looking man, dark, with a dark moustache, Sir Theodore Eldon — we danced together and I did not like his manner. When we sat out he was inclined to talk in rather an advanced way, and he sat very close to me, and told me some of his past history, and that his wife and he did not get on and he was very lonely and would I take pity on him and go out to dinner. I did not like him, and as politely as I could I passed him off.

I have since met a good many people very like him, they talk about "dear little women, poor little things," and are very well known in India.

The General, whose dance it was, bowed rather stiffly to him, as he took me away.

"Theodore Eldon," he said to me, "is not a very suitable friend. I should not bother about him if I were you. He probably asked you to dine."

"Yes, he did."

"Don't. His reputation is not a good one."

The night wore on, and the small hours advanced. Most of the guests had gone. Lady Angela, Bernard Chesham, and that group still danced. Mr. Vernon sat whispering in a corner with a very young girl. The musicians began to yawn. Meg came to find me.

"I'm so sleepy," she said. "I really can't sit up

any longer. I'm going to take one of those little silver trays of sweets up to bed. Good-night, dears. General, you look sleepy. I am glad I'm going to be a country bumpkin. Town life is so exhausting."

She went off.

"Come and have a cup of hot soup, General."

Lady Angela, Sir Theodore Eldon, mother, dad, Bernard and a few others, sat round a table regaling themselves on grilled bacon.

"I'll say good-bye," said the General, "I can't stand that crowd, I hope to see you to-morrow."

He made his adieu to our parents and went off.

Everyone was laughing loudly.

"Tell us another, Eldon," said Bernard, fetching me a chair.

"Not before the child," said Angela, "she wouldn't understand."

"Wouldn't she?" said Sir Theodore, and told a rather vulgar story, which I did understand.

"I don't like those sort of stories," I said. "I like something clever and witty."

"Dear Miss Prim," said Angela, "but doesn't it suit her, Theodore?"

"She knows that," said Sir Theodore, "the Quaker pose is much the most becoming. She's only keeping in the picture."

"It's with the greatest difficulty I'm keeping in the picture," I said. "I'm so sleepy."

"Let's put up the blind," said Bernard, "it's almost morning."

He got up and drew the heavy curtains. The golden rays of dawn streamed in.

"Behold 'twas dawn," he sang. "Five o'clock and a fine morning."

I looked out, past the dishevelled tables, and red shaded lights, the fading flowers. Above the opposite houses, the sky was pink and gold, and the first beams of sunlight which came in made the remains of the feast look a little tawdry.

"We've missed our beauty sleep," said Angela, "but in a good cause, so what's the odds."

They stayed on a little longer, and eventually departed, driving down the silent street, waving to us as we stood on the step — some waiters were clearing away the débris, the tired orchestra, their instruments under their arms, wished us good-night as they passed us, looking very different in their shabby overcoats, to the smart red and gold trappings of the evening.

"A very successful dance, my dear," said dad.

"Oh, I'm so tired," yawned mother, "silly of Meg not to sit up. What have I got to do tomorrow? A lunch I believe, an afternoon party, a dinner and a theatre — I don't know how I shall feel by the end of the week — run off to bed, Elizabeth, you look so tired."

I kissed them both and went upstairs. In my bedroom I drew the curtains and looked out — The salvage men were cleaning the road. It shone as the water flowed over it — a cat sat neatly on the step of the house opposite, and a poor old beggar man ambled along the pavement poking about with his stick. In the distance a church clock chimed one — two — three — four — five. . . .

Meg and I were so tired the next day we refused to see anyone till tea time; our sprightly mother went off to lunch before we came downstairs, so we had a quiet meal together, and sat in easy chairs by the fire. I thought it would be a good opportunity, and I told her in Diana's own words the story of the Mosaic of Love, and then we went and made some butterscotch in the kitchen. At 4:30 the General arrived, and we three sat in the dusk while the fire flickered along the ceiling; it was just beginning to be cosy, to sit by the fire, instead of taking tea at Ranelagh, or in the Kensington Gardens Tea Enclosure.

"There's a very after the ball feeling to-day, isn't there?" I said. "I feel sleepy and my eyes feel small, and I'm glad I'm not going out, because I'm tired and yet I wish I was, because everything's so flat after a party."

"I suggest," said the General, "we three dine at

a quiet place, and go to the Coliseum afterwards."

"With hats on," said Meg. "I'm not going to have another evening's hair dressing."

"As you like," said the General, "I'll get a small box. Stranmore left this morning, I suppose, he told me he should."

"And will be back the day before the wedding," said Meg.

Tea was brought in and we both had a cigarette.

"I feel very dashing with a cigarette," said Meg, "like Carmen or Lola Montez."

"Diana Wetherby was not at the dance last night, I notice," observed the General.

"She joins the Gray Sisters next week, so she would not come."

"It is curious why a healthy young woman with all life before her should want to immure herself in a nunnery," said the General. "I cannot understand it."

"Neither can I," said Meg.

"I can."

"You always say that," said Meg. "Explain."

I tried to.

"They have such a fund of spiritual entertainment,— they are not the same as we are, these people with a vocation, they do not care for the things of this world, they love solitude — they are hermits — they hear angelic voices — they see visions, and

dream dreams, they do it, not because of duty, but because they love it better than anything else."

"I once knew a monk," said the General, "splendid chap he was, very intelligent, could talk well on almost any subject, a real man of the world shut up out of the world and he once said to me, when we were discussing the subject we're now on, "I wanted to get away from the world in order to find my soul. I was too fond of the things that do not matter."

Mother came rushing in.

"There you are, dear General, glad to see you. I'm in a tearing hurry dining out at seven, and hardly any time to dress."

"The girls are coming out to dinner with me," said the General.

"That's very kind of you, put on your black ninon, Elizabeth, and do your hair nicely. Good-bye — good-bye, I must fly."

She flurried out and we heard her calling Kate as she ran upstairs.

"When I get up out of my grave at the Last Trump," said Margaret, "my hair will be in great disorder, if I have any, and it will spoil mother's first ecstatic glimpse into Heaven."

"Kate is in her element," I said, "and lords it over the other servants in the room. Do you know last night, she and Mrs. Ferguson, the housekeeper,

and Baynes had roast goose for supper, and there was only the beak left. She told me so herself. She is so awfully proud of having four helpings of everything, and remaining thin."

"It is rather an accomplishment," said the General laughing. "Talking of food, I'll get a table at the Carlton Grill if you'll allow me to use the telephone."

With soldier's punctuality we arrived there. The head waiter, a short man with a dark beard, and quick, intelligent dark eyes, smiled at us.

"Welcome, young ladies," he said, "good-evening, mon General. I have a table in the alcove, it is the cosiest place."

He piloted us to our corner, and bowed politely as he left us. He saw a great many things, that discreet, observant, polite head waiter. He knew many a family history, and looked on at many a romance, but he kept his own counsel, remembered the little weaknesses of his clients, and conveniently forgot their great ones; he could have written a volume, but limited himself to a page, the page on which he wrote down only the number of their table, and not the number of their guests, and bowing and smiling made everyone feel how glad he was they had honoured him by stepping into the warm, comfortable room to dine or lunch or sup.

While we ate our dainty dinner, I watched the

diners. Round the room in twos, or more, they sat at intimate tables. Three men leaning back, smoking cigars, and drinking cognac, having dined and wined sufficiently well — a young man and an elderly woman — the woman looking at the young man, the man looking at a pretty girl sitting near by — a happy couple sitting together, not so interested in the menu, as in each other, lifting their glasses, drinking to Love, forgetting everyone else in the room — an old Jewish looking man, and a fair beautifully dressed woman, with lovely diamonds, red lips and restless eyes roving round the room, anywhere away from the sight of the old man, who had spilt the ashes of his cigar down his coat and whose shirt-front bulged unbecomingly.

"Studying humanity," said our host. "I see a tense expression in your eye."

"I was wondering what relation everyone is to everyone else, and how much they like each other or hate each other, and what makes them dine together here, whichever they do."

"I expect because they're hungry," said Meg.

And we all laughed.

We got to the Coliseum in time for the first turn — acrobats — those unfortunate people, who always seem to be on the stage just when everyone is arriving, or just as they are getting into their coats at the end of the performance. We had a nice little box

at the back of the stalls, and the General smoked his cigar. The lighted number at the corner of the stage changed from two to six.

"Isn't it thrilling, just before the curtain goes up," said Meg. "There's going to be a little play. I like little plays."

The lights had not gone out. I looked around the building, and felt my eye drawn to a box, the fourth from our own, the center and Royal box. I saw a man, a young man, fair, broad shouldered, with blue eyes. He was looking at me very intently, not rudely, but just looking, and I looked at him too. The curtain went up, and the lights were lowered, and though it was not very easy to see we still looked towards each other. At last I turned to the stage and tried to interest myself in what was going on. I heard the actors talking, I saw figures moving about, the audience laughed now and then, but all the time I kept wanting to look at that young man. And every time I did look, his head was turned towards me, and I saw he was looking at me. I could not see his eyes but I felt them on me.

Next came Tableaux Vivants, the story of Parsifal — the music was fine and stirring, in the Grail scene the organ's deep notes seemed to vibrate and shake the building, until it trembled. They were nearly over. The curtain rose for the last time. I turned towards the box, the man had got up and

stood looking in my direction. Two other men were with him, one helped him on with his coat, then they went, and the music stopped — it seemed to me the music stopped, because the man went out. There was a rustle and movement, and people began to get on their cloaks, the band struck up a march, and we struggled out with the crowd.

"Just wait a minute, I'll get a cab," said the General.

We stood together in the doorway, the people surging past us. Outside there was the noise of cab whistles and porters crying out numbers. A carriage and pair came dashing up, and I saw that the Man was still waiting. The Commissionaire came up to him, and touched his hat. A tall old gentleman with him, said:

"The carriage is here, we had better go. The delay was unavoidable."

They passed quite close to us. Meg saw me looking at him. She clutched my arm.

"That's the one," she said.

"I don't know what you mean," I said watching his disappearing back, "what one?" I had never seen her so excited before.

"The one who came into the church up at Diana's, you know — when she was playing the organ."

"Is it?" I said. "Is it? Are you quite sure? Tell me Meg."

"Absolutely certain. He stared at you, how he stared at you!"

The carriage door closed with a bang. I saw him looking and looking through the window as they drove off.

"Come along," said Meg, "the General has got our cab."

She took my arm. I got in, and sat silently during the drive.

"Wake up, Miss Elizabeth," said the General, "you're dreaming."

"No," I said looking at him, "I'm not dreaming, I'm awake."

. . . . . .

There are days in life which stand out, and are forever remembered; days of acute anguish, or days of extreme joy. Yesterday was one of these — a day of realization, a day of awkening. Just as the Prince awakened the sleeping Princess with a kiss, so had the Man last night awakened my soul, with the deep regard of his eyes. I knew as we drove back through the dark streets, he was the ideal lover of my reverie in the chapel at Stranmore. I knew that I should see him again, how or where, I could not picture. I would not try to find him, I wanted him to find me, I wanted the high Gods to take care that for once there should be a Romance, and so I left it to them.

Margaret did not say much, but on the day before her marriage she put her arm through mine and squeezed it.

"You will meet that man again," she said, "I know you will."

"You think so, Meg?"

"Of course you will. He keeps on coming into your life, he cannot stay out of it."

She looked so young and sweet on her wedding day, and Stranmore so proud and gallant, that in spite of the difference in age, I knew they would be happy together. Diana in gray, a silver toque on her head and floating silver veil, looked like a dove. Hundreds of people seemed to be in the Church, and after at Knightsbridge, where a band was playing when we got back, the huge stairway was festooned with white flowers and wreathed in smilax. Diana and I helped her to change her dress, they were going to Paris. She was quite calm and sedate, and laughed when Kate called her "My Lady" for the first time.

"It's a pretty title," she said, "I hope I shall make a nice one; there's a good deal to live up to, with those beautiful ancestors looking down on me, but I'll try to show them they can in future look up to me—"

She told me not to be sad at her going, as she was determined not to grow apart from me. She said

we should be together a great deal, and have the loveliest time.

"Au revoir, darling Elizabeth, I am so glad we are sisters."

We kissed and clung together, I could not speak. It was as if parts of me had been torn off, I knew I could never love her more than I did, and I knew how dear her companionship had been to me, now that I was in a measure losing her. I saw her go downstairs, waving her hand blowing kisses as she went. I saw Stranmore waiting for her, and the group of bridesmaids clustering round her. I heard voices cheering them as they drove away, then I sat on my bed and cried. Kate came in, and sat on the bed too; I laid my head on her shoulder. "Very few sisters are as fond as you two," she said wiping her own eyes.

"I adore her," I said.

"Still you'll see lots of her presently. You don't know what a consolation it will be to me to have a Countess in the family. Did you see that old creature from Gloucester Place in the church?"

"Not Mrs. Jones," I said.

"She was there," said Kate, "and I took the opportunity of telling her a few facts. Many's the dust up I've had with her over your meals at 183."

"'I hear the young lady will have a tiara, a pearl necklace and a castle to live in,'" she said. "Two

of all the things you've mentioned," I said, "and was proud to say it — and carriages and horses and everything she wants. 'Fancy,' she said, 'and they used to occupy my dining room suite.'"

"I'm glad we don't occupy the dining room suite, now, Kate."

"That's what I'm telling you," said Kate, "so just dry your eyes, run downstairs and instead of occupying the dining-room suite, go and occupy some of those sweets in the dining room."

I laughed and went downstairs where the General and Diana consoled me, and we drank Meg's health in a glass of champagne. . . .

I missed Margaret more every day, the General did his best to cheer me, but I could not forget her. There was no one to talk to over the nightly hair brushing, and I appreciated more and more the charming relationship I had so long enjoyed. She wrote to me every day, long, long letters, telling me of her happiness, and of the great kindness of her husband.

He is too good; I dare not say I like anything, in case he buys it for me. I shudder to think how the historical landmarks of Paris would look if I suddenly took a fancy to the Arc de Triomphe or Notre Dame. I have not yet got used to things being very expensive and yet able to be possessed at any moment. I love Paris, it is so gay. Everyone seems to be there on pleasure, and it is the way of French people to appear gay, and to smile, which

makes life appear much more attractive. We have some people coming for the shooting and you are to come, too. (Not people like Bernard Chesham and Augustus Vernon.)

Give my love to the General, how I miss you, and long to see you.

MEG.

CHAPTER IX

SOME MONOTONOUS DAYS

Mrs. Jarrette called one afternoon. Everyone was out except me. She came in enveloped in red velvet, trimmed with silver, with a cloak to match lined with ermine, very much like a coronation robe. I put down my book as she advanced on me and kissed me, and then sat down heavily in an arm-chair.

"Oh, dear me," she puffed, "I don't suppose I shall ever be able to get out of this low chair."

I devotedly hoped she would.

"I will help you when the time comes," I said.

There was a silence so long, and embarrassing, that I thought I'd better break it.

"Very wintry, isn't it?" I said, looking out over the trees from which the leaves dropped slowly and regretfully.

Instead of answering my question, she said:

"Aren't you a naughty girl to make my poor boy so unhappy."

I was rather nonplussed.

"I'm very sorry," I said lamely, "I don't like being unkind to anyone."

"He's such a sweet character, and so attached to you, I don't think you ought to snub him."

"I don't think I ought to lead him on."

"Don't you want to marry anyone?"

"I don't very much."

"You make a mistake, girls are silly, they don't count without a husband."

"Sometimes they don't count with one."

"My boy would give you all sorts of nice presents. You'd have a lot of money to spend on yourself."

"I'm sorry," I repeated, "you are very good to offer me so much, but I don't want to marry Sydney."

"You shouldn't have encouraged him then," she said rather rudely.

"I didn't know I had."

"You have then, going out to luncheons and dinners, and your mother, too, and letting him call here, and dance attendance on you. Well, I'll say good afternoon, and I intend to see that he doesn't waste any more time."

I felt she wanted to say money.

She struggled to get up out of the chair, but couldn't. I sprang forward.

"Let me help you, Mrs. Jarrette."

"No, thank you, I'll get up myself."

She made a supreme effort, but sank back again,

exhausted, and eventually had to accept my proffered hand. She didn't smile once; even in the midst of her futile strugglings, to extricate herself, she preserved a sulky expression, and I thought how dull it was of her to be so lacking in a sense of humor.

"Good-bye," I said as I rang the bell, "I am so sorry to have hurt you."

"You will be sorry and regret having thrown away such a wonderful chance as my boy. You don't come of such an important family, you know, that you need give yourself all those airs."

"I know," I said, "but then I'm very healthy, and nicely shaped, and fairly brainy, so that not having many ancestors doesn't matter very much, does it?"

"I don't quite understand what you're talking about, but I will wish you good afternoon."

She sailed out, her ermine and red velvet trailing over the carpet like a garment of state. Dad was annoyed when I told him of the interview, and much exercised in mind whether he should telephone to Mrs. Jarrette and apologize for my rudeness.

"But I wasn't rude," I said, "you couldn't call it rude not to want to marry Sydney Jarrette. On the contrary, she was rather rude to me, for she said I was a person of no importance and I agreed with her."

"Did she?" he frowned.

"I don't think I am a person of importance. She was only being consistent. I should have been very surprised if she had behaved differently."

"It's a pity to ignore fifteen thousand a year."

"It's an awful way to earn it," I said. "I'd rather be a cook."

"Youth," said my father, "is headstrong and foolish. Has no judgment, and above all places value on the wrong things. The only important thing in life is money."

While Meg was away I went to some rather amusing parties at Lady Angela's. She was a very interesting character in her own way. She had a charming house, a number of very smartly dressed women friends, and they entertained each other, and there was great competition amongst them. She delighted in giving what she called, a "white luncheon" or a "pink luncheon," where all the food, from soup to ice, was of one particular colour, and I found her in great trouble one day, because she could not give a purple luncheon unless it is composed entirely of grapes and aubergines. She was always passing through phases, and one never knew whether one was going to have a Lord Mayor's banquet, or the meal of a fairy queen, all crystallized rose leaves and violets, with honey and water as a beverage. She dressed in rather an outlandish way, and spent a great deal of time design-

ing her clothes, which might have been left alone.

I went to tea one day: She telephoned to-day she had a surprise — I was lonely without Meg, so I went. When I arrived, I thought I had come to the wrong house, for there was a deep red carpet, deep red walls, and a smell of incense, yet the same butler opened the door.

"What has happened?" I said.

He shook his head and said in a resigned voice, "Her ladyship has had the house done up."

She ran downstairs to greet me.

"Darling Elizabeth," she said, "come up. How do you like these new effects. Isn't it wonderful, so warming."

"Rather exhausting, I think," I said.

"It's the only color, I have been told; I must surround myself with red, in order to attain repose of mind, and perfect health. Come in here."

We had arrived at the drawing room door which she pushed open, and I groped my way in.

"Do you know Madame Yamsaki, and Madame Banzoulish?"

I bowed to some dim people sitting on stools in the half light, and presently the resigned butler brought in curious Eastern sweetmeats, and chutnies, which he handed to the guests. Then it all came out. She had met a wonderful man, an Oriental, who lectured on the "Higher Color Dominion"

and who had as his password, the sentence, "Red is the Only color, the True color, the Color of Life."

My eyes smarted very much, and I thought I would go, just as Prince Pasha, Puani Sanscrit, was announced. He looked very much like one of the gentlemen in the cigarette kiosk at Earls' Court. They all got up, and made a sort of curtsey to him and called him "Master," and I was allowed to recede which I did as quickly as possible.

It seemed to me that Lady Angela wasted a tremendous lot of energy on perfectly stupid things. She was always running after new sensations, and never happy unless she was redecorating her house. . . .

Autumn was far advanced. Little mists lay over the Park, and the trees were almost bare. I walked with the General amongst the dead leaves.

"Another year is passing," said he; "they seem to hurry at my age."

"I don't think anybody has much time," I said. "What is a lifetime really?"

He smiled down at me. "My dear, yours is before you."

"I have lived in so many different places, and in such very different circumstances, I feel as if I am quite old."

"Wait till you fall in love, then all the trees will be green, dear, and all the birds will sing."

"I do not want to sing now, Autumn makes me

sad. 'Tis like the death of a beautiful young woman."

"I know what's the matter with you, you're missing Meg."

"I am."

"You'll see her soon."

"I know, they want me to go up there next month."

"Then it will be my turn to be sad," said the General. "But to-day let's consider 'our marcis,' it's a fine afternoon, you're looking extremely pretty, you're going back to tea with Michael, and Meg will be back in a few days."

I looked up at him and laughed. "My flock of thoughts was wandering, and you have set the sheep-dog of commonsense to gather them together again."

When we arrived at Lancaster Gate, I had recovered my spirits.

Mrs. Stone, Michael's mother, was a handsome, rather stout woman about fifty, very self-centered and full of imaginary ailments. She received us with a plaintive smile.

"I'm really not fit to be up," she said, "I feel so languid and queer. I was up very late last night at a party, and have only touched the merest bite of chicken for luncheon, with a tiny sip of cham-

pagne, so perhaps you had better go up to the schoolroom, you will find Michael there."

"How is Michael?" I said.

"Oh, he's very well, clumping about and riding a rocking horse. How restless children are, they weary me with their constant moving about. I'm afraid I shall not be able to have tea with you, I have to dine out to-night, I must rest. You know your way. Isn't it a pity I'm such a martyr to health."

"It is indeed," said the General.

"Perhaps we shall see you before we go?" I said.

"I'm afraid not. I ought not to be disturbed. So good of you to trouble about Michael, he's a very tiresome child, I always think. Good-bye."

"Poor Michael," said the General, "a *imaginaire malade* for a mother, and a nurse who tells him there are no fairies and no Santa Claus."

"Isn't it lucky I met him," I said as we went upstairs.

"It's lucky we both met you, I think," said the General.

Michael received us at the door with open arms.

"I was just wondering if you had forgotten to come. I was getting so anxious. There's such a nice tea, and I got sugar and butter, and condensed milk so that Mrs. Pan could make some toffee."

We did justice to the tea and cakes, and afterwards made toffee; Michael kept trying it, to see if it was hard enough, in a basin of water, and eating all the bits that were still too sticky. At last it was done and poured on to a greasy tin where we left it to get cold. Then I was ordered to read to them; I read the story of a divinely beautiful Princess and a cruel Ogre and a handsome Prince who galloped to the rescue on a milk white steed. Somewhere in the story a rhyme occurred about the ill-treated Princess.

> If your mother only knew,
> Her heart would surely break in two.

"That means," said Michael thoughtfully, "her mother's heart would break, if she knew she was unhappy and lonely."

"Yes, dear."

"Do you think mothers care if their children are lonely?"

"Of course they do, Michael."

"Mine doesn't."

The General looked at me and sighed.

"I think I shall have to adopt you, Michael," he said.

"What does adopt mean?"

"It means if you have no little boys and girls of your own, you look after somebody else's."

"Do adopt me."

"I'm afraid your mother wouldn't let me?"

"Yes, she would," said Michael, "she doesn't like me at all, and you do like me, and we should all be happy."

"Perhaps I'd better ask her," said the General.

"Oh, do ask her."

"At any rate, you might come and stay with me for a little while, when your mother goes away. I have a very nice housekeeper who would look after you."

"Nicer than nurse? She's awfully boring. She doesn't like anything pretty, or fun, or games, or anything. I should be a lucky boy if I could come and stay with you."

Nanny came in to say it was time for Michael to put away his toys.

"Good-bye, dear Michael," I said. "Thank you for the nice party."

"Don't forget," he whispered to the General.

"Rely on me."

"I wonder," he said as we got out and were walking towards home, "if she would let him pay me a short visit. I cannot bear to see children neglected."

"We might try, instead of rescuing a fairy Princess, to rescue a little lonely boy."

"It would be an unusual arrangement."

"It's an unusual case," I said.

When I got in mother met me on the stairs.

"There's a wire from Meg," she said, "they're coming back to-morrow. They'll be staying at the Carlton as they won't open up the London house before they go North."

I felt depression lift like a mist. I wrote a few letters and went to bed early, so that to-morrow would come more quickly.

I met them at the station. We flew into each other's arms, while Stranmore looked on, smiling indulgently.

"She doesn't look as if I treat her very badly, then?" he asked as we sped along in a taxi to the Carlton Hotel and Kate full of importance helped her to dress, whilst Stranmore went down to order a table.

"He is angelic to me, Elizabeth, so kind and thoughtful, he has bought me some lovely sables and dresses, and to-morrow I'm to take you out and buy you anything you like."

I dined with them, mother and dad joined us after, and we all went to the theatre. At supper we met Lord and Lady Brindsley and their daughter. He was rather an important member of the cabinet, and they were neighbours, their Estate adjoining Stranmore's. The daughter was pretty, with dark eyes, and black hair. She told me she adored London but they didn't come up very often

so she was delighted to think Meg would be near them.

"I saw a picture in the *Sketch* of one of your house-parties," I said, "it looked great fun."

"Oh, yes, we have plenty of parties, but they're all political, and ducal, and royal, and much too stately. I once spent a week with a school friend of mine in Chelsea. We had the romp of the season, I was taken to the Chelsea Arts Ball, and when we came back we all danced up deserted Chelsea Embankment in our fancy dresses."

She was all fire and vivacity, and her mother stately and dignified. I could not help thinking how very unlike them people's children are.

"Deliciously simple, your sister," said Lady Brindsley, "I wonder why I never met her before."

"We didn't go out much until about a year ago," I said, "we became rich then and began to go out to parties."

"And before?" said Lady Brindsley, looking at me in an amused way.

"Before that we were poor, and nobody invited us, except Diana of course."

"And now Diana has gone into a nunnery. It's absurd, she ought not to leave the world at her age; she has not seen enough of life to decide whether convent bells or wedding chimes sound sweetest."

When they said good-bye she said she hoped she

would meet me again and I told her I was coming up to stay with Margaret quite soon.

I found Kate sitting up for me when I got back. She never would go to bed but always waited to see how I had enjoyed myself and what news there was to tell. I told her how sweet and happy Meg looked, and that her husband was most kind to her.

"I wish you could meet some nice man," she said as she folded my dress.

"But you don't like men, Kate, why are you so eager for me to settle down?"

"I begin to think it would be a good thing for you to be in love with someone."

"Kate, you haven't fallen in love, have you?"

"Me? Not likely, I hate men. All over the place when they're engaged to you, and nowhere to be found when they're married to you. That's men. At the same time, there are nice ones, I suppose, and I'd like to see a fine strapping young man, with a good character, and lots of money, running about after you."

"There's no rush that I can see," I said rather cynically.

"Ah, well, I'll give you another year and then — we'll go a tour 'round the world and become adventurers again."

"It is rather fun being adventurers, Kate."

"There's nothing like it for variety," said Kate,

"and I always did like a bit of variety. Good-night, put some cold cream on your lips, they look rather dry."

. . . . . .

Meg and I had a glorious day shopping, and she bought me lots of pretty things. Mother joined us at luncheon, and we all went down Bond Street, where we met Bernard, the snob.

"My dear Lady Stranmore, Elizabeth, Mrs. Sutherland! What a pleasure. How smart you all look. What heavenly violets. I was just wondering if I should meet anyone worth meeting. Talk of angels and you all appear."

He was quite out of breath.

"Come and have chocolate at Charbonnel's," said mother, "and tell us all the news. You always have some."

And over our cups of creamy chocolate he waxed very eloquent.

"Angela is going to be married. Such a rich boy, years younger than she is, so plain and spotty — so — I believe you know him — you do — Sydney something."

"Jarrette," I said.

"Probably," said Bernard.

"Won't mamma Jarrette be delighted," I said.

"Will she?" said Bernard. "I expect Angela will forget all about poor little Sydney, and tear off

to Paris with me, and a lively party, and he'll let her, as he won't dare to argue with a title. She has promised to give some most expensive parties and I am to bring all the guests. I'm going to do myself very well, I assure you. I used to like Angela myself once, but, really, she's too expensive, so I don't mind if she does marry Mr. — er Carrot — er — Parrot —"

"Jarrette," I said.

"The name's bad enough, it doesn't really matter," said Bernard airily. "Do come to the play to-night, I've got a box and supper after at the Tigress."

"Meg and I are spending the evening together," I said.

"You come, Mrs. Sutherland, you're always ready to amuse yourself, now do."

Mother accepted and we parted at the door, Bernard flying off, because he spied the Duchess of Wold's carriage outside a shop, and we saw him asking the footman something as we walked away.

Stranmore had a Parliamentary dinner, so Meg and I dined at home. Just like old times.

"Are you really happy?" I said. "You don't wish you had married someone young?"

"No, not a bit, it's just as I knew it would be, restful and away from all worry and difficult personalities like dad."

"He is difficult," I said.

"Have you seen the one again?"

I shook my head.

"Do you think of him?"

"Very often."

"Would you like to marry him?"

"Yes."

"Would you without knowing anything about him?"

"I would marry him to-morrow if he asked me."

"It's like wondering how a book will end," said Meg. "I wonder if you will live happily ever after, if you do meet him again."

The next day they went, and I returned to ordinary routine. Dad rated me because Sydney Jarrette was engaged to Lady Angela.

"I think you might have done it. It was the one thing I asked of you."

I began to wonder if I was being selfish, and foolish. I was living for a dream, a vision, a fleeting glimpse of a man in a theatre — He didn't even know my name, he had probably never thought of me again. How could I possibly ever meet him. I had nothing definite, nothing tangible to go on. In the night a ship had passed me, on the darkened sea, for a brief second, a light had illumined a face, then the darkness enveloped it again, leaving me alone watching, waiting, expectant.

Diana wrote from Stapleton where she had gone to the Gray Sisters.

I have brought the picture of Sister Eleanora and have it on a table in my cubicle. The chapel is so restful and the sea noises are like exquisite voices. The nuns have made me very welcome. I feel as if I had been away in a busy noisy place, and have come back home. Nothing is strange to me, nothing irksome. I am very glad to have left the rough and thorny path for this sheltered retreat, where I can live with those whose every thought is pure and sweet, and where my soul can commune with the Unseen. We have a guest house, where I hope you will come some day. I should so love to show you how happy a nun can be, and as Sister Eleanora first led my steps to you, I have taken her name, and so you see you have a letter from your most loving

SISTER ELEANORA.

I showed this letter to the General.

"That is the letter of a contented mind. We may not understand, but we must admit she has found her soul there."

"Could a soul be found in the world?"

"I believe that great sorrow or great happiness releases the soul."

Then I told him about the man. He said it was a wonderful story.

"I don't know that I shall ever see him again."

"That of course is in the lap of the gods," he said, "but it is an interesting sequence, first in the old chapel in Yorkshire, then again in London. I

do not know that such a chain, though only forged by a very few links, could cease. I think you will meet again."

"I believe the whole of my life depends on it."

"Then you must meet again," said the General, "if I have to search London for this unknown young man. And now I must tell you that Mrs. Stone has consented to Michael coming to visit me. She is going away to take the cure at Bath and was rather wondering what to do with the boy. So Nanny is to have a holiday, and he will be with me for one month. Mrs. Binks will look after him. She jumped at the chance. She's very fond of boys and he'll be in good hands. He's coming next Monday, a few days before you go North."

"Then I'll see you both settled comfortably before I go."

Mother was glad for me to stay with Meg, but had a rooted idea, that to go to the country was always to bury oneself.

"There will be other people, a party."

"Yes, perhaps, but the country is so damp, and everyone gets up too early, and country shoes are unbecoming, so are country clothes — really serviceable ones — lumping skirts."

"But, it's so healthy and fresh and good for you."

"It's not good for me," said mother, "my mind feels clogged. You go for miles without meeting

anyone, and when you do meet anyone they look so dull — The women wear fashions of years ago, there are no theatres, no shops, and when you walk in a village, you always get back to the church and the churchyard — Most depressing."

"What a long speech," I said.

"I know what I'm talking about," said mother, "I used to live in the country, but I didn't like it, that's why I married your father."

The week drew to a close. I had a small glimpse of another sort of life. It was in Oxford Street one wet day. A little girl carried a rather large parcel, and a jug of something — The street was slippery; she missed her footing, and fell on the curb. The parcel came undone, a loaf of bread fell out, and rolled under a passing cart, the wheel went over it and destroyed it. The jug lay broken in a pool of milk and the little girl stood crying. I went to her.

"Don't cry, I'll get you some more."

"The jug's broken," she said, "and I can't buy any more milk."

"I'll buy you a new jug, I'll give you back everything you've lost. Come with me."

We avoided the little crowd that had gathered, and went down a side street.

"There's some shops in Marlebone High Street," she said.

And there we went a-marketing, and got some

more bread and some more milk and a new jug, and I added some things of my own — cheese, bacon, butter, tea — jam. We bought as much as we could carry and started for home. Home! — a dingy street, a narrow passage way, stairs bare of carpet, a tap room, and in the room a group of little children — Two small boys, and a little girl, like the one with me, a man lying on a hard iron bed with a dirty blanket over him. The window cracked and broken. On the table a newspaper spread and five old cups, and plates. Near it a broken-down black horse-hair chair, and two almost seatless cane chairs. There was no fire, only a small rusty spirit stove, with a kettle on it — Everything dusty, dirty, cheerless, sordid.

"We're in a bad way, Miss," said the man, "I've been laid up, can't get to work, asthma so bad, comes on in the damp weather."

"The lady's been awfully good, father. She's brought us some things to eat."

"Please let me help you to get tea ready," I said, taking off my gloves.

"You're more than welcome, and it's very kind of you," said the man gratefully. "Here's Jenny having to be mother, and sick nurse, and everything combined."

"I'll do what I can," I said.

Soon the table was set more tidily, the stove

lighted, the kettle singing and some bacon frying in an old frying pan quite merrily. I lighted the stump of a candle when all was ready, and they gathered 'round the table, wan, solemn little creatures in their ragged clothes — Slice after slice of bread, rasher after rasher of the savory bacon, they ate — one after another, the cups came back for more tea — the father lay on his bed, smiling contentedly, eating his share. In the midst of this pleasant meal, there was heard the sound of a step on the stairs. Jenny started.

"Mother Jarvis," she said.

A big gaunt woman, in a dirty sackcloth apron, stood on the threshold, her hair slovenly, a faded pink blouse open at the neck.

"Having a good feed, and me wanting the money for yer room," she said in a nasty voice.

"What do they owe?" I said quickly.

"Fourteen shillings and sixpence. Been owing for weeks now."

"Here's a pound," I said, "don't worry them, they're so happy. Don't give me any change. You can take next week's rent out of it too."

She looked at the money, and then looked at me.

"I wouldn't be 'ard, only I got my way to make, and my children to think of."

"It's all right," I said, "I'm sure you won't be hard in future."

"Feeling better, Mr. Potter?" she said quite kindly to the sick man.

"Yes, thanks to this lady's kindness," he said.

"I'll come up and give the room a bit of a clean to-morrow."

"I'd be much obliged if you would, Mrs. Jarvis; it 'd do with it, I'll say that."

She went out. I heard her thudding, thudding down the wooden stairs, a receding tide of disaster.

"My," said Jenny, heaving a sigh of relief, "it's something to have paid her off."

"I can't thank you," said the man.

"Don't thank me," I said. "I'll come again, I never did anything like this before. I did not know people could be so neglected. Good-night, don't worry, I'll be your friend."

"God bless you, Miss."

I shut the door and descended the dark stairs, and so into the street — The evening was wet and foggy — A few loungers stood at their doors, a baby was crying somewhere in a house nearby — a boy leaned against the lamp post playing a mouth organ, oblivious of the drizzling rain — I found a cab and drove home. The hall was warm and luxurious, the fire was red — I mounted the soft carpeted stairs to my own comfortable bedroom — Only a street or two away, in a gloomy tenement building, six people sat at a dirty table on broken

chairs, their faces smiling, though grubby, smiling because of the things which I had bought — What contrasts life produces — I did not know till then, how much bliss can be purchased for thirty shillings. I had never spent my pocket money like that before. It was almost like being a god, to bring the smile to the faces of children.

"I leave you two charges whilst I'm away," I said to the General, as he and I and Michael sat 'round the table having tea at his flat in Campden Hill Court, "the Potter family and Michael. Look after them."

"I'll see to it," said the General. "Is that all you would like me to do?"

"That's all."

"We shall miss you, Mrs. Pan," said Michael, "awful much. But I do like being here, they understand a person here more than at home. I wish I could live here for always."

"Well, sufficient unto the day," I said, "which means be happy while you are here, and don't bother about the future."

"We intend to make some expeditions," said the General, "so that the days won't seem so long while you're away. We're going to the Zoo, and the Tower of London, and the British Museum to see the Egyptian mummies."

"Why was Egypt famous for mummies more

than any other place, Mrs. Pan? There's mummies everywhere."

"They're different sort of mummies," I explained, hiding a smile.

"The best sort I suppose, as they are so famous — mummies who truly love their children, and don't tell them to go away because 'my head aches'."

"The very best mummies in the world," I said.

Michael sighed.

"I'm sorry my mummie wasn't an Egyptian mummie," he said. I sighed as I put on my gloves.

"I'll see you home," said the General. I kissed Michael good-bye, and left him with Mrs. Binks, fat, rosy, and gray-haired. He was in good hands. We went 'round to the Potters on the way home. I had ordered some coal at the General's expense, and we took a parcel of nourishing food. We didn't go up, but Jenny came running down.

"Farver's much better, and the children's getting quite fat with all the food they have now. Farver sends his regards and respects, and he likes the books. Sometimes he reads bits of them to us after tea. How people think of things to write I don't know. Don't you be away long, we shall miss you."

I felt a glow on me. Michael, the General, the Potters, were all sad at my going. They would miss me, and think of me and want to see me again. I

felt as if the sun shone on me — That night I lay awake a little while, wondering about the morrow, and I thought that however short the journey, and however much people may like going away, there is a touch of death in all partings.

. . . . . .

"This is your room, the one we had together when we came up before. I thought you might like it," said Meg.

"Who's here?" I asked.

"There's a rather nice man called Houston, Colonel Houston, and his son Gerald, a Mr. and Lady Cecilia Montague, the Duke and Duchess of Wold, perfect dears, always snapping each other up, but very devoted really — The men go shooting all day, and we can do as we like. I've seen a good deal of the Brindley's Muriel, the girl is passing through another fit of depression, because they have what she called 'a rampingly royal house party' at present."

"It all sounds great fun to me. What shall I put on?"

"Something pretty," said Meg, "I'm longing to show you to people, and let them see what a delightful sister I have."

The Duke of Wold was big and red-faced, with side whispers like a groom, and his lady, small, fair, and beautifully dressed. She spoke in a quick, jerky

way, and turned her head with little brisk movements like a chirpy sparrow.

Colonel Houston was rather the General's type, and his son, just as Meg had said, boyish, keen on sport and always in the open air.

Mr. Montague, a gruff country squire, and Lady Cecilia, stout and very much like a farmer's wife, were both full of fun, and good talkers.

Gathered 'round the hospitable board, we were very gay and festive. Everyone seemed to know each other, and get on well. The Duke had a small argument with his Duchess about his throat which had been a trifle relaxed.

"No shooting to-morrow, love," said her Grace.

"Nonsense," said the Duke sulkily.

"You know what your throats are, dear?"

"You speak as if I had a dozen."

"One is enough with laryngitis in it."

"Nonsense," said the Duke again, "I won't be coddled."

"He is so self-willed," said the Duchess to Stranmore, "I can't control him."

"You wouldn't keep me indoors when there's shooting like this," said young Houston, "never had such a topping time in my life."

He turned to me.

"We motored up the moors, and shot from the car. We took the dogs, and got no end of grouse."

"We're eating some of the victims now, I suppose," said Lady Cecilia. "Men are cruel creatures, they love killing things."

"What about the osprey?" said Mr. Montague, "are not you ladies cruel, too?"

"That's true," said the Duchess. "I never wear ospreys."

"They don't suit her," whispered her husband, "that's why."

"Don't give me away, Goliath," said the Duchess, shaking a finger at him.

I looked up and down the long table — How sensible Meg had been. How solid she now was, at the head of her table, glittering with silver and crystal, laden with fruit, resplendent with hothouse flowers — I saw Stranmore catch her eye, and lift his glass. She smiled and blew a kiss.

"Old Stranmore's fallen on his feet, marrying your sister," Gerald Houston said to me in a low voice.

"She is lucky, too," I said.

"Oh, of course — rather," said the boy, "only — well, most of the luck's on his side."

After dinner the Duchess played to us. She was a magnificent pianist, and knew most of the operas. It was a great treat to sit in the softly lighted luxurious room and listen. Everyone retired early, as the men had had a long day in the bracing air,

and began to be a trifle absent as the evening advanced. I was glad to go, too. Any journey, however small, seems to tire. I embraced Meg and told her how happy I was to be with her and went up — I thought of the friends at home when I put out the light — the General, little Michael the funny ragged Potter family — mother with her pretty dresses and power of enjoying parties — dad with his schemes and plans — I wondered what they were all doing. They seemed very far away, and thinking of being far away reminded me of the train journey, the rush through towns, and woods, and long flat stretches of country with distant hay-ricks and spires; the sudden startling vibration of another train passing in a flash and for a moment blotting out the landscape; the rush into tunnels, and gradual emerging into light. I seemed to hear the beat of the wheels, and the long whistle as we roared through country stations — I seemed still to be in the train, tearing along — the telegraph posts running up to the train and passing swiftly away in endless succession.

CHAPTER X

THE MEETING OF TWO

I woke up early, I heard a sort of horn in the distance. I heard a door bang far away in the house somewhere and a dog barking and yapping outside.

"Everyone gets up so early in the country," I remembered mother's words. I smiled to myself. I thought I would get up early, too, and go for a walk before breakfast. The house was quiet when I came out of my room, there were noises of sweeping and brushing downstairs, and a man whistling. I went out — it was a fine frosty morning — breezy, rather cold. I had put on a thick Shetland Jersey, and a scarf, and a fluffy wooly blue tam-o'-shanter. I ran quickly down the frosty path. The grass was furred with white — I got warm by running fast, and sat on a boulder by the river, which hurried past me, leaping and swirling, as if it were in a very bad temper. The sun was bright, the sky intensely blue, over the river the trees were bare of leaves. I could see quite a long way up the woodland path which, in Spring, had been hidden by overhanging branches. As I looked absently, thinking of the

fallen leaves, and the lovely lost summer, I saw a man coming down the path — tall and broad, a gun over his shoulder, a dog at his heels, strolling down the bare little path, the sunlight all about him. He came nearer and nearer. He looked over the river which was narrow just there. We had met again, my Man and I. Only the narrow rushing river divided us — there were some big boulders uncovered, and some flat green weeded stepping stones; he came over to me, and stood with his cap off. The sun shone on him, his face was red, his hair looked fairer because of it.

"It's a long time," he said, "but I did not forget you."

"At the Coliseum that night?"

"Yes, I knew we should meet again. The High Gods have taken a hand."

"I hoped it would be in this sort of place," I said, "just nature, and trees, and sunshine."

"Any place would have been the same," he said gravely. "Shall we walk together over the fields? I often imagined we walked over the fields, we two." We walked side by side — I thought I was dreaming — until I felt the wind on my face, and a dead bramble caught my skirt.

"That means you have a sweetheart," he said, taking it off. "Have you?"

"No," I said, looking at him earnestly.

"Until to-day," he said.

"Until to-day, if you wish."

"The gods wish it, evidently," he said, "for they have brought us together."

We came to a gate leading back to Stranmore up the hill.

"Where do you live?" he said.

"I am staying with my sister, who has just married Stranmore."

"I remember, I saw it in the paper."

"Do you live here?"

"No, I am also a guest, in a house not very far away. What is your name?"

"Elizabeth."

"It's a nice name, but I'm going to call you Perdita. You remember they met in a wood, Perdita and Florizel. Will you call me Antony?"

"Antony, what?"

"Just Antony."

"It's very romantic like that."

"Everything about you is romantic. Will you meet me to-morrow at the same place and time?"

"Yes."

"Will you think of me all the time till then?"

"Yes — will you?"

"I can't help thinking of you. I cannot think of anything or anyone else in the world since that night when I saw you."

The stable clock chimed nine.

"Oh, it's nine o'clock — breakfast — I must go."

"I suppose you must, to-morrow then, don't forget."

"I can't forget either," I said.

I left him. I went towards the house. I turned, he stood looking after me. I waved to him. . . .

"Who is he?" said Meg.

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"His name is Antony. I only told him my Christian name and he only told me his."

"But where does he live?"

"I don't know that either. He says not far from here."

"Isn't it too interesting; we must ask him over if he lives near."

"Don't do anything till I tell you," I warned her.

"I won't, of course, only — I hope — it's all right."

"Is God all right?" I said. I felt as if the whole earth and sky were full of singing and melody. The day passed, meals came and went, the afternoon drew on, the men came back, noisy, heavy of foot, full of chat about the day's sport, then dinner and more talk and laughter and music, and the day was over; only the gulf of night lay between me and to-morrow — Just as the river separated us in the

morning, it separated us; I kept wondering who he was. He was so fine and young and fond of me and we had met at last — we had spoken together — I did not think I should sleep, but I did dreamlessly, and the gulf of night grew narrower and thinner until at last the sun dried it up and it was morning. We met again. . . .

We ran through the woods to get warm, and then sat on a fallen tree trunk.

"Look at those rowan berries, aren't they red?" I said.

"They are not so red as your lips."

"Look at the sky," I said, looking up, "isn't it blue?"

"I would rather look at your eyes."

I laughed and blushed.

"You say things like poetry."

"You make me think of them."

"The earth is very beautiful."

"Now we have met, it is beautiful," he said.

"This is love then?" I asked.

"This is love. Whether or not it will bring us happiness I do not know."

"Is there any reason why it shouldn't?"

"There may be," he said, slowly lighting a cigarette. "You see, although the world means only one person to me, and only one to you, there are quite a number of other people about."

"Are there?" I said.

And we laughed.

It seemed a splendid joke. A robin came fluttering down and perching on a branch looked at us sideways.

"There's that robin at all events," he said, "eavesdropping. I wonder if he's the little bird everyone talks about and who talks about everyone?"

We laughed again, just because to laugh together on a sunny morning was delightful.

"I don't know who you are really," I said.

"I know who you are."

"Do you?"

"Yes. You are Miss Elizabeth Sutherland. Your father has made a lot of money in railways, you live in London in a house at Knightsbridge."

"Did you know all this yesterday?"

"I found it out during yesterday."

"How clever of you; are you a detective?"

He really did laugh that time.

"No."

"Well, what are you, then? A soldier, a sailor, a tinker, a tailor?"

"A thief," said he, "for I want to steal you. Now don't talk any more about me, I want to know about you. About your life, what you think, where you live."

"There won't be anything more to know about me in the future, because from now I am merged in you."

"You're such a darling. Talk to me."

I told him, as far back as I could remember, and he seemed very much amused. He said he would like to meet Meg, she must be so charming, because I loved her so much.

"I think you'd better come to tea or luncheon," I said.

"I can't very well, just at present."

"Why?"

"I'll tell you later on. My people want me to work, not go out to parties."

"I see, but you must have some meals somewhere."

"Oh, I have meals."

I looked at him rather critically.

"I do hope you're not a ghost or anything."

"A ghost?"

"Yes — well — you only appear at dawn and to me, you don't seem to have a name, you know all about me in one day, and you're vague about meals, it sounds uncanny doesn't it?"

"I'll just tell you one thing, you imaginative angelic thing. I love you, I want to marry you, but before I do I shall have a lot to arrange."

"Lots to arrange?"

"Yes."

"About money, do you mean? Because I'm used to being poor, I shouldn't mind that a bit. You know I told you about when we were poor."

"Not about money at all, but don't you bother, I'm going to see to everything, it will be quite all right and you need not trouble your pretty sagacious head about anything."

"Very well," I said, "if you say so I won't. But about Meg, shall I bring her out here one day? Do you live in a hut in the woods?"

"No — no — no. I won't tell you where I live, but I can't often get out alone, and that's what I must try and arrange."

"I don't understand it in the least," I said, "but I leave it to you."

"Bring Meg to-morrow and then she will know that I'm all right, and not a brigand who is going to run away with you."

"That will be very nice. To-morrow as ever is; she thinks it all most thrilling."

"It is thrilling, it is the best thing that ever happened to anybody in the world. I want to kiss you."

I didn't know I should like to be kissed, but I did. I was glad nobody had ever kissed me before — I saw a picture once called "A Summer Idyll," a shepherd kissing a nymph, in a little wood on the edge of a cornfield; 'round their feet bloomed a

cloud of red poppies, and blue cornflowers, the nymph's gold red hair was like a mist about her, and in the distance, over the waving golden sea of corn, a red harvest moon rose up — This was a winter idyll, under the bright morning sun, with burning, blue sky above, and bare trees overhead; but the kiss was the same. . . .

Next morning Meg went with me and I introduced him.

"I saw you that day in the chapel," said Meg. "Do you remember me?"

"I heard the music and came in. Some fate led me there."

"Some fate has brought you two together again," said Meg. "It is most mysterious, and like a story, but we don't know anything about you, do we?"

"I will not keep you in the dark much longer; I was anxious to see you, so that you would not be uneasy about your sister. Now look at me well, and tell me, do you trust me or not?"

Meg turned her grave eyes on him.

"I trust you," she said, "my sister is very dear to me. I want her to live happy ever after, and if you cannot tell us much about yourself at present we must wait."

"I'm afraid I cannot at present," he said.

"That means," said Meg slowly, "that you are

either engaged to someone, or married, even, or else that you have gorgonesque relations — or that you are someone very, very rich, and not allowed to be happy because you've got too much money."

"I will tell you within a week, everything you want to know, but I'm not married, and not engaged, though there is a lady in view; my parents' view, not mine, the only lady for me stands here."

He kissed my two hands.

"There's that clock again," I said, "it's always breakfast time."

"I suppose we had better be going," said Meg. "Good-bye."

She gave him her hand and turned away.

"Until to-morrow," I said.

"Aren't you going to kiss me?" he asked reproachfully.

I called after Meg.

"Don't look for a minute, darling."

"I didn't on purpose," said Meg, and strolled tactfully on. . . .

But to-morrow was raining. Great gusts of wind swept past the house, and bent the sodden branches of the trees. Heavy clouds scudded across a whitish sky, and a silvery light was reflected in the puddles — I put on a thick coat and ran out down the slippery path. I got very wet. The grass swept 'round my feet like a little brook, the trees dropped

big drops on me. He was there in a great-coat. We clung together in the rain and wind.

"The sun is out through the rain, now you are here, but I must not let you take a cold. I'll see you to your gate."

He took my arm and we walked under the wet trees. It didn't matter, we were together.

"Things are shaping," he told me as we parted. "Read this letter, think of me. I'll try to see you to-morrow or next day. I've got a plan."

"You love me?"

"I adore you, I worship you. Run now, pretty thing. Au revoir."

I hurried back and into a hot bath and so to breakfast.

"You are one for the open air," said Gerald Houston. "I often see you coming back in the mornings. We could go out together, I'm always up."

I felt myself getting hot.

"Yes — we might — but it's very wet to-day, isn't it?"

"Very, but I saw you coming up the lawn helter, skelter."

"Now, dear, is that wise?" said Lady Cecilia, pausing, with a huge piece of cold grouse on the way to her mouth. "You might get pneumonia."

"Or laryngitis," said the Duke with a twinkle.

"You should be careful," said the Duchess, "you won't go out to-day, Stranmore, I suppose?"

"No, I think not. Margaret, you said you'd help me put away some of the new books."

"I will indeed," said Meg, "your room is in a perfect muddle, and I don't dare to un-muddle it."

"She's terrified of me," said Stranmore, "daren't oppose me in any way — I believe in wife beating, you see, does them a world of good."

Meg kissed the back of his head as she passed his chair.

"It does me good," she said, "to see you perking about, and making jokes, and not always buried in a library reading your books."

"I am reading one of the best books in the world every day now," he said, "come along."

They went out together, and I stole up to my room and read my letter.

My lovely Perdita:

Ever since that evening when I first saw your face, I have been in love, I have been in heaven—I have seen the world anew, and I know what the man who has been in the arid desert feels when he sees the oasis—what a thirsty earth feels after a shower of cooling rain—what the lonely castaway on a desert island feels when he sees a sail! You possess my heart, and you are ever in my thoughts. That first meeting in the winter woods, with the rushing river between, was the consummation of my dreams of you. As you stood there, wrapt in the blue woolen scarf, your cheeks red in the wind, your little

blue cap, like a halo on your bright hair, you were to me the emblem of youth, and supreme joy, and when you smiled I thought the bare branches had leaves on them, and all the ground was white with spring flowers — when I kissed you for the first time, the whole of the earth seemed bathed in a flood of blinding light, I heard all 'round me bells, chiming, and ringing, and swinging in melody. Soon I will come to you, and take you for my own, and I now swear to you, that I will love and cherish you, in sickness and in health, in poverty and in wealth, and I will keep me only unto you as long as we both shall live.

ANTONY.

Oh, Diana! my sweet nun; can you forego such joy as this, may you never receive from your man a letter so full of burning love? When I had read that first tender love-letter, my thoughts went out to her and I was glad not to be a nun.

. . . . . .

It was late in the same afternoon, I sat in the drawing room with Meg, the men were playing billiards.

"I would like you to read this letter, Meg, you will then see how his mind is."

"It is a great privilege," said Meg, and took the letter.

I looked out of the broad window, which framed a lovely picture, the storm clouds had all gone, and the sky was clear washed and translucent; a bright spear of light from the setting sun glorified the

purple moorland, and made the rain-drops on the branches and window-pane glitter like molten gold. A flock of wild birds streamed across the sky, down the misty hillside walked the herdsman after his beasts. I thought of some lines I had once read.

A little mist creeps up o'er hill and dale,
A distant bell, sweet summer's knell doth toll,
A shepherd calls his flock across the vale,
I hear the distant drums of winter roll.

"It is like looking into a soul," said Meg, giving me the letter back, "he is a good man, I believe, you should be very happy some day."

. . . . . .

I had a tiny note that night, the butler handed it to me after dinner.

I cannot go to the trysting place to-morrow, but you will hear of me later in the day. Do not show surprise, though you may find it hard not to, at whatever happens.

ANTONY.

Meg tackled Bentley.

"Who brought the note, Bentley?"

"A groom, my lady."

"Did he say where he came from?"

"No, my lady, but —"

"Do you know where he came from?"

"I think he came from the Marquis of Brindsley's place, my lady."

"From Cottenham?"

"Yes, my lady.'

"I see, thank you."

"He's staying at the Brindsley's then?"

"Did Muriel speak of any one of the guests in particular then?"

"No, at least she said there was a Royalty of some sort and a political guest or two."

"I wonder, perhaps he's the Secretary to one of them. He's too young for a politician, and he certainly isn't the other."

"Well, they're bringing a party to dinner tomorrow," said Meg, "so we shall see. What fun if he's amongst them. I am to know who is coming, in the morning."

"We can get introduced properly then. Do you think he will come?"

"I should think it very likely."

"That's what he means then perhaps, in this note. Look, 'You will hear of me later in the day.'"

"Dinner, of course."

"Evidently," said Meg.

"Only read what he says, 'that I am not to be surprised at whatever happens.' I don't understand that."

"I do," said Meg, "he probably doesn't want the Brindsleys to know that we've spoken to him

without an introduction, I'm quite sure I ought not to have let you. You see I'm a chaperone now."

The next morning I had a long epistle from the General. He and Michael were having a very enjoyable time. "Michael is not so grave as he was, we go for splendid walks, I took him by train to Ruislip the other day, and we walked over the fields and had tea at a little inn, with home-made jam, new laid eggs, and everything he wanted. He seems to appreciate every picturesque turn of the road, and pointed out many of the beautiful effects of sunlight on the tree-trunks, for though it was cold the sun was very bright — We agree about one thing above all others, we miss the charming young female who brought us together, and we hope she is enjoying herself. Remember me to Stranmore, he very kindly invited me up, but I will go later, as I do not care to leave Michael. Have you any news? I hope you have met some interesting people up there. My love to her ladyship. Yours devotedly, Richard Samson."

I had not yet written to tell him of Antony. I thought I would wait until things were more settled. Meg came in while I was reading. She had an open letter in her hand. "They are bringing four guests to-night," she said, "this is what Lady Brindsley says, 'We are bringing the young Prince of Basle. He does not want any fuss made about it. Sir

George Dalrymple, Captain Stuart and Aunt Agnes Ladbroke.' "

"Captain Stuart, that's my Antony," I said.

"Of course," said Meg.

"He must be a sort of gentleman in waiting, and couldn't ever get off without that ridiculous Prince."

"What a bore for him, I don't envy him, it must be awfully trying to be in waiting on anybody. That's why he could never get off by himself. What do you do with a Prince I wonder?"

"He's the King's cousin, it's rather exciting really. I think I'd better ask the Duchess about the etiquette."

"He's a charming creature," said the Duchess, "quite good-looking and exceptionally brainy. A great musician, too."

"But old, you may depend upon it," whispered Meg to me.

"Do we curtesy to him?"

"Yes, just make a little bob, when he shakes hands. He's very nice and simple, and don't forget to ask him to play, Lady Stranmore."

"Stuart, so that's the name. It goes rather well with Elizabeth, sounds rather old-fashioned, Elizabeth Stuart. I don't wonder he couldn't go out when he liked."

"I suppose we shan't get in a word to-night. Probably the Prince wouldn't let him marry."

"We needn't meet trouble half way," advised Meg, "the Prince may be a very kind, fatherly old thing, and take a fancy to you. Oh, dear, I must go and order the banquet. I hope the salmon has come. That fishmonger is the only blot on my married life. He keeps me in agonies of suspense every day about whether he's going to happen or not."

She hurried off to consult the housekeeper, and I went out with Gerald Houston who was teaching me tennis in the covered court.

"I wonder if the Prince is a nice old man?" I said as we rested between the games.

"Old, he's not old, quite a young chap. Jolly good sport, too, fellow I know, knows him well."

"What's he like?"

"I don't know, never seen him."

"Could a Prince — prevent any person who was — in his employment — getting married?"

"Shouldn't think so. Who do you mean, a valet or something?"

"No — you know — they have men going about with them."

"Sounds like a mental case."

"Don't be silly, Gerald, I mean — his gentleman in waiting — Could he prevent his getting married?"

"Don't suppose so, at least, he might perhaps if the lady was a rotter."

"Well, she isn't," I said indignantly my face flaming.

He looked at me.

"I don't know what you're driving at. Is anyone belonging to the Prince engaged to anyone you know?"

"I don't think so — I don't know quite — never mind — it doesn't matter."

"Then if it doesn't matter let's get on with the game."

I put on my white dress, the one I had worn at our dance. I wanted to be in white. I wanted him to think me pretty, because we had only met in the very early morning, when it was cold, and even in the rain.

"You look lovely, Elizabeth," said Meg as we descended the wide staircase together.

"I feel a little frightened, somehow."

"Silly Elizabeth."

Everyone assembled in the lofty hall. A huge fire of logs crackled and spluttered, casting dancing lights on the brass work. The lamps glowed softly under their rose-colored shades. Outside the wind whistled and moaned. At seven forty-five, the party from Cottenham arrived. I only saw one of the party, and as I looked at him, I saw that the guests bobbed to him, one by one, as he shook hands, and I knew then that he was a Prince. I

trembled as he took my hand; I tried not to show any surprise, and he passed on and spoke to the others which gave me time to recover. Everything seemed in a sort of haze. I heard people talking and laughing. I went in to dinner on Captain Stuart's arm — He was a stern looking, thin man, with iron gray hair, and moustache, and eye glasses, and I wondered as he looked so stern, what he would think if he knew about me and his Prince, whom he kept rather an alert eye on. Now and then down the long table I caught Antony's eye, and I smiled at him and he at me, and after, when we had gone, I didn't hear a word the Duchess said to me. I kept thinking of him, and of how wonderful, and awful, and disturbing it was, to have a Prince fall in love with you, when you are not anyone in particular, and you know what a lot of trouble will happen because of it.

"You are dreaming, young lady," the Duchess said.

I begged her pardon.

"I said that the young Prince looks rather a fairy tale one."

"He does," I said softly.

"He's the strangest creature," said Lady Brindsley, "he's been ill, you know, and is here convalescing. We have known his father, Prince George, for many years. We don't see much of the

boy, he has his own suite, and goes in and out as he likes, at least not quite as he likes for Captain Stuart keeps a very careful watch on him."

"He is meant to be a sort of watch dog, I suppose," said Lady Cecilia, "in case he should get into mischief."

"I think that highly improbable," said Lady Brindsley, "because he is so studious, and aloof, and doesn't seem to notice women at all."

"He will," said the Duchess, "he will notice women presently. Can a duck swim?"

"His fate will be a hideous one, I fear," said Muriel, "a fat German princess will be his portion."

"What a pity," said the Duchess, "and such a nice boy."

Meg looked at me and moved over.

"Well," she said, "what do you think of it. I am afraid there are breakers ahead."

"It must all end," I said, "his position makes everything impossible."

"He knows better than we do, and he said he was trying to arrange something."

"Princes can't arrange things. People think for them."

"At any rate we must hear what he says about everything."

She smiled a little.

"I am awfully glad it's a Prince, darling, even

if you never marry him — It's very much like Cinderella, isn't it?"

"Very," I said. "When we sat by the smoky fire, in the Gloucester Place sitting room, with the incandescent gas popping and gurgling over the mantelpiece, we didn't think a Prince would fall in love with one of us, did we?"

. . . . . .

When the men appeared, Antony came straight over and sat beside me.

"So that's what," I said reproachfully.

"Yes," said he, "isn't it unfortunate."

"Most people think it fortunate to be a Prince."

"If it is to make any trouble for the lady I love, it is unfortunate, but it shall not spoil our lives, we have been brought together, and I will not let them take you from me. Come and meet me to-morrow."

Meg came back to us.

"Indiscretion must not be the fault of a Princess," she said in a low voice. "Do not allow anyone to know you are such friends. Won't you play to us, it would be such a pleasure. You can say what you like to her to-morrow."

He rose.

"I'll tell you how much I love you in the music," he said to me softly as he moved away with Meg towards the piano, and when he played I was quite content. I heard how much he loved me. Now and

then he turned his eyes in my direction, and played with deep feeling and passion — He played for me alone.

At about ten-thirty Lady Brindsley took her guests away. In the entrance where Meg and I stood together to see them off, he brushed past me.

"Good-night, beloved Perdita."

"Good-night, Florizel, the letter was wonderful. I sleep with it under my pillow."

They went away in the windy night, the red lamps of the cars fading away like dim poppies in the blackness — I shivered and went in. I laughed a little as I kissed Meg.

"Even Kings doff their crowns for a nightcap," I said, "and rank is very much a matter of daylight. Most people look alike in their night shirt, and in their coffins." . . .

When we met the next morning, I said:

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"Because I wanted you to love a poor wayfarer."

"I should have done it in any case."

"Now I know you really love me."

"You will not be allowed to marry me, Antony, it has never been done."

"That doesn't mean it never could be done," he said, "look at Mrs. Fitzherbert and George the Fourth. They were married."

"In a very peculiar way," I reminded him.

"He was the King, I am only the King's cousin, not nearly so important."

"I don't like Captain Stuart."

"Neither do I," said Antony. "Isn't he an old lynx?"

"He would like to keep you from me, when he knows about us he will."

"I am going to marry you."

"I don't see why you shouldn't. Why are Princes not allowed to marry beggar maids?"

"Oh, some rot about the succession, but I am quite a distant relation, so it really wouldn't matter."

"We might just as well never have met," I said despondently.

He tried to cheer me and begged me to trust him. He asked me to tell Meg he would marry me whatever happened, and however difficult things might appear. And then Captain Stuart came down the path and stood looking at us. He took off his cap and bowed coldly to me.

"This weather is not very good for you, sir," he said, "and apart from the weather, it is not good for you to be out so early every morning."

"We weren't out yesterday morning," I said.

"No," he said icily, "and I trust you will not be out to-morrow morning. If you will allow me, I will walk back with you to your house, as it is almost breakfast time."

Antony stood with an angry expression on his face.

"I will see Miss Sutherland up the hill," he said, "and join you later."

Captain Stuart bowed to me formally. I hurried away from him, he frightened me. Antony followed.

"Spy," he said, angrily chipping off the dry twigs with his stick.

"He will never let us meet again, it's finished, he hates me."

"It is not finished, I shall meet you, it is only the beginning. Keep up your heart, for I swear I will marry you whatever happens."

We parted at the little gate, and he went swinging off.

"So that's what happened this morning," said Meg, "I don't know what to advise. We'd better await developments. Your Antony looks to me a man of spirit and determination."

"Hadn't we better ask Stranmore? I feel sure he would advise us."

"I think I should wait," said Meg, "oh, I do hope your life is not going to get in a muddle."

I felt everything was going wrong — A week passed — We met once, but I had a note delivered to me every day. The last one asked me to meet him in the music room, where the long windows opened out into the garden. He suggested I should

be there after tea, when it was too dark for anyone to see him come in. At five-thirty I waited for him and he came. We clung together.

"Now, listen, during this week Stuart has scarcely let me out of his sight, but to-day my servant, George, told me he sent off a wire — It was to my father, saying he must get me away from here at once, and asking for instructions."

"Oh, Antony, they mean to separate us."

"I mean to prevent them."

"What can you do?"

"I've got a plan, the only one, very bold. I must try and work it, because if I go away from here, they're sending me to France."

"France!"

He put his arms around me.

"Hush, I'm not going, I intend to make a plan so that I need not go."

"Will it be a nice plan?"

"If it comes off it will be a great plan, and it will mean that I stay here in this house."

"This house! What is the plan?"

"I can't tell you yet. My man will have to help. He's as true as steel, and I think a Doctor."

"You're not ill?"

"No, sweet thing, but I shall be if I'm taken away from you."

"I feel like that, too. When I say good-bye to

you there's a sort of empty feeling, as if there isn't anything anywhere."

"You do love me, then?"

"I do indeed."

"Then everything is worth while."

"I wish I were a Duchess in my own right."

"I don't, I want you to be a Princess on my own right."

"I wish I knew more about this plan, it frightens me; will it hurt you?"

"Nothing would hurt me, so long as I can see you."

"Is it dangerous?"

"No; look, it's getting late, I must go. I'll come again to-morrow about the same time, or get a letter to you."

We kissed.

"It's rather an adventure, really," I whispered.

"I love an adventure when you are the heroine."

I opened the window and let him out into the darkness. I left the library and went along to join the others in the hall. Everyone was leaving the following day — The Duchess was busy with her ribbons.

"You must come and stay with us in the spring," she said to Meg, "Suffolk is a very attractive county; I should like to show you my gardens."

"Your gardens are famous," said Lady Cecilia,

" the Water Garden too beautiful. I saw some pictures of it in *Country Life.*"

" They wanted me to pose against a sun dial," said her grace, " but I thought not, and the Duke thought not. I don't feel the least like a water lily, or pond nymph at my age, though at one time, I remember, the Duke likened me to something equally ethereal."

"A nymph is all very well in theory," said Mr. Montague, " but give me someone who looks after one's comforts. A sip of honey and a drop of dew is very poor fare for a man."

The Duchess was pleased.

" I think I do look after him well," she said, " and he has such an excellent dinner at home, he seldom wants to dine out."

" Well, I shall miss you all," said Meg, " when you leave me to-morrow; it has been my first party and everyone has been happy."

" You are a delightful hostess, my dear," said the Duchess, " I must congratulate you. The Duke is not the only one who will not be anxious to go out to dinner."

" You are staying on with your sister? " said Lady Cecilia to me. " You seem to be great friends."

" We've been a great deal together all our lives," I said, " and her marriage will not separate us I'm thankful to say."

There was a movement and everyone gathered up their books and work and rustled upstairs to dress. On the way up I told Meg about the interview in the library.

"What plan can he have?" she said.

"He said it was a bold one."

"I hope he isn't going to dash off with you on a fiery horse, like the knights of old."

"It's about the only way," I said despondently.

"It's almost quieter not being in love," said Meg, as she went along to her own room.

CHAPTER XI

THE ACCIDENT

The next morning everyone left, and we were by ourselves, which was very much to our liking, for we felt we could walk and talk, whenever we were so inclined.

"Now, what is the best thing to do?" I said.

"Put on our coats, and go for a walk, and talk the whole thing over," said Meg.

"We're always doing that."

"Well, Elizabeth, it's the only thing to do. It's a great help to talk. Look at the people in Hyde Park, they can't do anything, but they love talking, it does them a lot of good."

We wandered through the woods arm in arm.

"You see," said Meg, "we must be practical, and sensible. I want to know if Antony is necessary to your happiness. You don't know him very well, I consider him extremely nice and good looking, but of course character is the thing that matters, and we do not know much about his, at present."

"I think in matters of the heart one has a sort of instinct. Cats always know the sort of people who will be kind to them. All animals do. Women are

the same. I have waited so long, there seems to have been a reason for my waiting, and Antony has been sent to me in such a strange way, that by instinct, I know he is meant for me, he is good, his character is fine, and in fact, he is necessary to me."

"You are willing to face great difficulties for his sake?"

"Yes."

"You don't think it would be better to say good-bye, and leave him all together out of your life?"

"No, because I sincerely believe he would be very miserable if I did so."

"Very well, then, we must wait a little longer and hear his plan. It seems a pity such a big situation has to be faced. I wish your Antony was just a nice soldier, and you could marry him without any fuss and bother."

We were nearing a gap in the trees, when a shot rang out, not very far away. Meg stopped.

"They're shooting," she said, "we'd better move off in case we get winged."

We turned in the opposite direction. There was a sound of running feet, twigs snapping, a man appeared with his hat off breathless.

"Lady Stranmore."

He came up to us and stopped.

"I am Lady Stranmore!" said Meg.

"Then come with me at once please, my lady."

"Why, what is it?"

"If you follow me, my lady, I will tell you. Do not be alarmed, but something unusual has happened."

"Is anyone hurt?" I asked quickly, as we hurried after the man.

"Yes, Miss, my lady, not badly."

"Oh," said Meg, "how dreadful, let us hurry, what can we do?"

"I was to assure your ladyship, and the young lady, not to worry. I was to go to the house, only I saw you walking there. Everything will be all right, I think, I hope."

I began to feel a sickening feeling of apprehension, as half running, half walking after the hatless, breathless man-servant, we followed. Then I saw someone standing against the tree trunk.

"Antony," I cried out and ran to him.

"What is it? Are you hurt?" said Meg.

His hat was off, he looked rather pale, but smiled, he held one hand against his chest. A temporary sling had been made roughly.

"It's all right," he said, "I did it myself."

"Yourself, Antony, how could you try to kill yourself?"

"No, not that, I had to be made unable to move. George knows, he was there."

George shook his head.

"He would do it, my lady. I tried to persuade him not to. His Highness has shot himself in the shoulder, my lady, it's awful."

"But why," said Meg wildly, "why do this?"

"I won't be taken from you," he said fiercely, "they've made arrangements, I was to go to-morrow. Stuart went to get the tickets, and carriage to-day."

I took his hand in both mine.

"How will this help? I shall never be allowed to see you?"

"That's all arranged, George knows — You know what to do, George, now go and do it — Lady Stranmore, I want him to go to Stranmore Hall, I want you to give him your orders — Send him to Stranmore to get assistance."

"I will," said Meg, "but —"

"I desire to be carried to your house, where I can be near my Perdita."

He stopped and held his arm a minute with the other hand.

"You're in pain," I said. "Oh, Antony, it's dreadful, what can we do?"

"I'm glad to have this pain, it is better than the pain of separation."

"So that was your plan?" said Meg, "it's a wonderful, awful plan, I'll do everything to help you. Yes, I will."

She turned to a servant waiting there.

"Go to the Hall," she said, "speak to the housekeeper, say I sent you, bring some men, and a carrying chair, there is one, I know, tell them to prepare the blue suite, then come back quickly. Say you met me, and those are my orders. Say anything you like."

He touched his head and was gone.

"I love you for doing this mad, bad thing, but will it be any use?"

"It will hold things up, they cannot take me away, my father will come down probably, certainly, and I shall tell him about Perdita — Why are you looking so pale, I'm not in danger, darling girl."

I felt the tears rising in my eyes.

"It is the most heavenly romantic deed," I said. "I am not worth it."

He kissed my hand and rubbed it against his cheek.

"We might be living in the middle ages, people don't do these wild, quixotic things now-a-days, for love," said Meg.

"People don't love each other enough," said Antony.

"Do you feel very ill?" I asked, "sit on this log, and lean against me."

"I feel nothing but happiness when I am with you."

"What shall we say," said Meg, "I must tell Stranmore."

"Please don't," said he quickly, "I will bear the brunt of this deception. I have planned it very carefully, there are only three conspirators, myself, my servant and the old Doctor."

"Dr. Newton?"

"Yes, such an old sport. I tell you he's a man in a thousand. He's got old-fashioned ideas, and was in love with his wife."

"What do you want him to do, how did you get him?"

"I must have a Doctor, someone local, to say I can't be moved, because I really think I could be moved to Cottenham — Of course they'll send down a London man, when they hear, but I wanted someone on my side, before he comes."

"What did you tell him?" I asked.

"I told him everything. He was rather difficult at first, but afterwards consented."

"It all seems like a queer dream," said Meg, "but it's so bold, and well thought out, and the prize is love. That is the reason why I'm going to help."

Voices sounded through the trees, and presently two of the gardeners from Stranmore appeared, carrying a chair, the butler followed with George. They hurried towards us. With great care they

helped my man to his feet, and assisted him into the chair, and carried him through the woods, Meg and I following.

"Go for Dr. Newton at once," directed Meg to one of the men.

There was a great commotion when we arrived at the house; maids peeped over the bannisters, heads were seen through the door leading to the servant's part of the house. The housekeeper preceded us up the stairs, to the blue room, where the bed had been opened and everything prepared. Meg and I went downstairs and left him to George while we waited for Dr. Newton. Tea was waiting.

"I can't take any," I said, walking up and down restlessly, "people often die of quite simple wounds, I feel awful."

Meg came over.

"I don't think your man will die," she said, "he has too much incentive too live, even if he were much more seriously injured than he is; except for looking a little pale, he is not in any danger, he seems quite as usual. Now dry your eyes, and don't show everyone how much you love him."

She smiled, and going over to the tea table, began to pour out tea. She was so calm, and sensible, as she sat there putting cream and sugar into the cups, that I became calm also and went and sat with her.

"Your man is here in this house. You are together, at least for a time. Here is your tea."

It was not possible to grow morbid, or hysterical, with her eyes on me, and I felt very refreshed by the cup of tea. Meg rang the bell.

"Bentley, has his Lordship returned from York yet?"

"No, my lady."

"How is his Highness, has he had some tea?"

"I took up a tray, and his man is looking after him, he seems quite comfortable, my lady."

"I see, let me know immediately when Dr. Newton comes, and you'd better tell Saunders to have the car ready, in case he has to go and fetch anything for the Doctor."

"Very good, my lady."

"I wish Stranmore was back, I wonder what I ought to do."

"We ought to tell Captain Stuart and the Brindsleys."

"Of course, how foolish I am. I'll telephone."

She went over to the telephone.

"Put me on the Cottenham."

She covered the receiver.

"He can fume and fume," she said, "that old Stuart, but we have his Prince safely under our roof, and we can defy him. Hullo, hullo. Is that Cottenham? Can I speak to Lady Brindsley?

Lady Stranmore speaking. Very urgent — yes."

She turned her eyes to me.

"It will be a bomb —"

"Hullo, is that you? Margaret Stranmore speaking. Your Prince has had a shooting accident. He is here in my house. We've put him to bed and the Doctor's coming. No, I hope not. Captain Stuart is out — Oh — Please tell him on his return — Do you expect him soon? I see. We're doing all we can. His man is with him. Yes, certainly, if you like, I should be very glad of your advice. Good-bye."

"They're coming over post haste, Stuart is out, went into the town to see about the journey to-morrow, I suppose. All this fuss about you," she said laughing at me. "Aren't you important?"

"There wouldn't be a fuss if I was important," I said, "don't you think I might go up and see Antony, there's nobody here, I ought to be with him."

"Listen, there's the car, it's the Doctor."

Dr. Newton came hurrying in, he was an old friend of the Stranmore family.

"Dear, dear," he said, "what a business, I never thought I should attend a royal patient, where is he. I —"

"We know all," said Meg.

"We ought all to be ashamed of ourselves," said the old man, taking off his coat, "I most of all — I

don't know what made me do it, I'm a weak old fool."

"I know what made you do it," I said, "the nicest reason in the world. You were in love once."

"That's true," he said, "that's true."

"And although you are a Doctor, you're suffering from a very unusual complaint, Romancitis."

He laughed.

"I mustn't stand talking here, let me go up at once, please, it's a great responsibility, a great responsibility."

"Come then," said Meg.

It looked dark, steely blue outside against the light flare of the big fire — A streak of red lay across the horizon like a smudge — I felt excited. Big things had begun to happen to me — I could not conjecture what his father would say — how Stuart would behave. The future was full of portent and extraordinary possibilities, perhaps great misery, but to-day was mine, nothing else mattered at all — Stranmore came hurrying in and behind him Bentley, who switched on the lights, dispelling my dreams of the dusk.

"What is all this I hear? Where is Meg? How is the poor boy? I hope everything is being done?"

"The Doctor is here," I said, "Meg is up there waiting for news."

"I'd better go up."

He went upstairs, and Bentley drew the curtains while the footman cleared the tea table.

When they came down I saw that the news was not bad.

"He has a little fever, but the wound is a clean one."

"I can't think how he could have done it," said Stranmore, "he says he tripped over a large root, and stumbled, and the gun went off. Might have blown his head off."

"Narrow escape," said Dr. Newton, putting on his coat, "thank goodness it's no worse, I've sent your man for a few things, Lady Stranmore, and I think you ought to have a person of a more important position than mine to look after him."

"Nonsense," said Meg, "you know you're the cleverest doctor for miles, and you never get any rest, what with people going out of the world, and people coming into it."

"I do my best," said the old man with a smile, "at the same time, the responsibility is too great under the circumstances."

With a great tooting, and noise, the Cottenham party arrived. Lady Brindsley in a great state of excitement, Lord Brindsley taking his eye glass out of his eye, and putting it in again nervously.

"My dear, what an unfortunate thing, what had we better do? Captain Stuart is still out, I don't

know whether to wire, or telephone to Prince George, or whether to wait for him to come back."

"I advise telephoning at once," said Lord Brindsley.

"It takes hours to get on to London," said Lady Brindsley.

"Then the sooner we try to get on the better," said His Lordship, "after all he's our guest, we are in a measure responsible for him."

"Is the poor boy conscious — oh, Dr. Newton, there you are, that's all right then — Is it dangerous, will he die? What a pity it happened in our house."

"It didn't happen in our house," said His Lordship, "it happened in Stranmore's wood, so that we are completely exonerated."

"His Highness is going on quite satisfactorily at present, my lady," said Dr. Newton, "a little increase of temperature, but otherwise nothing abnormal — However, I think His Lordship is right to telephone to his father, as I should wish to shift the responsibility as soon as possible, if you will allow me I'll get on for you."

The others stood about in groups talking.

"What is the number of the Prince of Basle, nobody knows, I suppose?"

"I do," said Lady Brindsley, "ask for three Mayfair. Captain Stuart used to telephone every

evening, when Antony first arrived, to say how he was."

"Trunk. Three Mayfair," said Dr. Newton, "how long delay? Twenty-five minutes, very well. I think I will be going now," said the old man.

"You ought to see Captain Stuart," said Meg quickly.

"Then I will come back, I have a few patients to see. I will be back in an hour."

"That will do very nicely," said Meg.

The Doctor put on his old north country bowler, and muffling up his throat in a gray scarf, went out.

"Princes are so trying," said Lady Brindsley, "it's like having an important State document in the house, that someone wants to steal, or a valuable piece of jewelry. They are so precious it's exasperating. Not that the poor boy himself is a bit of trouble, but Captain Stuart is rather unnerving, and seems to think Antony ought never to be out of his sight. I'm sure I don't know what he suspects him of, for a quieter boy there could not be."

"These quiet boys," said Lord Brindsley, polishing his eye glass, "are sometimes rather deep — It never seems to occur to people that those who are quiet about the ordinary events of life, are possibly also quiet, about other things!"

"You are being enigmatic," said Lady Brindsley, "and this is not quite the moment, for I am too

worried to attempt to unravel what you mean. Remember you are not now in the House of Lords, you may speak plainly."

His Lordship smiled a little.

"May I speak plainly, Miss Elizabeth?" he said, looking at me.

"Why do you appeal to Elizabeth?" said Meg.

"I thought she might know something," he said. I also looked at him.

"I don't know what you mean, Lord Brindsley."

"No?" said Lord Brindsley, "then I may be mistaken."

"I don't like Captain Stuart, if that's what you mean," I said, "he is a horrid little man, always creeping about and spying."

"You've noticed that?" said Lady Brindsley, turning to me, "I didn't know you ever saw him."

I got rather red.

"I saw him when he dined here," I said quickly, "he seemed to follow Prince Antony about like a detective."

"You are very observant, Miss Elizabeth," said Lord Brindsley, "Lady Stranmore, will you allow me to smoke?"

"Please do," said Meg.

"I'll have a cigarette, too," said Lady Brindsley.

The telephone bell rang, Stranmore answered it.

"Hello, Yes—is that the Prince of Basle's

house — Lord Stranmore speaking — Prince Antony has had an accident while shooting — I wish to inform Prince George that his son is in my house — not in any danger at present — we have called in the local Doctor and his condition is satisfactory — Yes — I would like to speak to the Prince if he would kindly come to the telephone — I will hold on (It's the Secretary speaking, the Prince is in, he's gone to fetch him) Yes, sir? Stranmore — quite satisfactory — but thought it best to inform you — Dr. Newton, our own man — of course as you wish, sir — I can put him up and a nurse — right, they've missed the last train I'm afraid, that one arrives in the early morning — very well, sir — thank you — good-bye."

"He seems very concerned, and is sending down their own doctor and a nurse."

"What a worry," said Lady Brindsley, "can we be of any use now?"

"I can arrange everything, thank you, dear, Lady Brindsley," said Meg.

"You may have to put up Captain Stuart."

"I regret I shall not have room," said Meg firmly, "we can send the car backwards and forwards at his orders, but I will not have him in my house."

"I think perhaps you're right," said Lady Brindsley, "we brought some things; his dressing

case, and a bag full of underthings, his man can fetch the rest any time."

"Won't you stay and dine?" said Meg.

"I really don't think so," said Lady Brindsley, "I think we had better be going. Aunt Agnes is still with us, and you know what aunts are. She will want to know everything. Come, Stephen."

Lord Brindsley got up out of his comfortable chair and reluctantly took up his cap.

"We'll send Stuart on at once," he said, "we left a message for him to come on. Good-night, my lady. Why don't you go up and nurse the invalid," he said to me softly, as he shook hands.

"I — go up?"

"That's what he would like, I believe," said he with a twinkle.

"I don't understand," I faltered.

"I understand," said his Lordship, putting his eyeglass into his eye with infinite care, "I understand," he repeated. And patted me on the shoulder, with a whimsical look, and followed his wife.

"These quiet men" he had said, he was one of them himself. Who would have thought that he noticed anything. He always seemed to be fiddling with his eyeglass, whilst he really saw too much and did not require an eyeglass at all.

When they had gone, I left Meg and Stranmore, and ran up the corridor leading to Antony's rooms.

The door was ajar which led to the little suite — A light dimly burning, and George moving softly about. He saw me and came to me.

"How is his Highness, asleep?"

"No, miss, asking for you, he was just now."

"Do you think I might come in just for a minute?"

"Indeed, you might, it would do him good to see you."

The fire was burning red on the hearth; there was a light by the huge four poster bed, with a blue silk shade. He lay on his back propped with pillows, his head turned away from the door. He heard me come in, and turned his head. His eyes lighted up.

"My beloved Perdita, at last you have come. How did you escape away from convention?"

"I just slipped away. May I sit with you for two minutes?"

"Give me your hand, I want to kiss it, and lay my cheek against it."

I sat on a chair near by, and George busied himself at the other end of the large room.

"I am with you, I can see you, I can hear your voice, I can touch your hand. It's well worth it."

"How could you do such a big deed?" I said.

"For love and you," he whispered. Is Stuart here?"

"No, he doesn't even know yet, he's out."

"Thank God, I'm free for a few hours."

"We told your father on the telephone, he's sending a nurse and Doctor."

"Damn," said Antony, "not that it matters, it's all in the plan I suppose. Is my father coming, too?"

"I don't know."

"Well, if he comes, he shall rid me of Stuart. I won't have him in this room. I won't have him about me."

He turned his head from side to side.

"George."

"Your Highness."

"Remember, I may have to see Captain Stuart for a minute or two, but please don't let him stay, you can easily say the Doctor wishes me to be quiet. You understand?"

"Yes, Your Highness. I shall be pleased to keep the gentleman out."

"I am making you worry," I said, getting up, "I'd better go."

"Not yet, Perdita, don't put out the light."

"I wasn't going to put out the light," I said, "I'll leave it on."

"You are the light."

"You meant me?"

"I meant you."

I sat down again — holding my hand the Prince

fell asleep — Meg came to the door softly.

"Elizabeth, come down, Captain Stuart is here."

I tip-toed to the door, closing it gently.

"He's downstairs, very agitated, I knew you were with Antony. I didn't want him to find you, so I said I'd run up and see if he was able to see anyone."

We went down together. Captain Stuart was pacing up and down the hall, he looked very angry, and also anxious.

"This is a calamity," he said, "I can't say how anxious I feel, it is most unfortunate."

"It is very fortunate my house was near," said Meg.

He made no reply.

"Can I see the Prince?"

"I believe he is asleep," said Meg, "I was not allowed in."

"I will go up at once and see," he said, "if someone will show me the way."

I stepped forward but Meg interposed.

"I will go with you," she said.

. . . . . .

He stayed to dinner, conversation was rather strained. He was polite but reserved. Stranmore did his best, and so did Meg. I did not want to talk. When I looked up, I often found his eyes fixed on me.

"You will remain until the Doctor and nurse arrive from London, Captain Stuart?"

"Er — thank you, yes."

"Will you have a cigar?"

"Er — thanks."

Meg rose, we went out together, leaving the men.

"It's ridiculous for Captain Stuart to treat you as if you were a designing hussey," said Meg, "you didn't know Antony was a Prince."

"Captain Stuart doesn't know I didn't, I think I shall tell him if I get an opportunity."

"It won't make much difference," said Meg.

"I suppose he has to be like that, as he's a sort of policeman."

"Not half so nice as a policeman," said Meg.

"He looks to me as if he had eaten a poker, and couldn't get his head quite above the last little piece of it."

Meg laughed.

"It's rather a good description," she said, "how was Antony when you went in this evening?"

"Not very bad I think — So glad to see me. He fell asleep holding my hand. I wonder if his father will come down. I —"

Just then Stranmore and Captain Stuart came in.

"Margaret, my dear," said Stranmore, "come to the library with me, Captain Stuart wishes to speak to Elizabeth."

Meg got up and, slipping her arm through his, went out of the room. Captain Stuart walked over to the fireplace and stood facing me where I sat.

"What do you want to say to me?"

"How long have you known Prince Antony?"

"Three weeks."

"Had you met before?"

"No, not exactly."

"What do you mean — exactly?"

"I mean I saw him at the Coliseum about two months ago."

"And he saw you. I remember. Did you know his position?"

"How could I?"

"You might have seen his photograph in the papers on different occasions."

"I haven't."

"You know how serious it is, when a Prince wishes to marry a lady who is not of some important family."

"I didn't know till lately."

"It is not only serious, it is impossible, utterly impossible."

"I heard you the first time."

"I cannot impress it upon you sufficiently. In the ordinary course he would have been sent away immediately."

"I know."

"This accident will oblige him to remain here under the same roof."

"I'm glad," I said defiantly.

"I do not doubt it, Miss Sutherland. You should in all good taste go away from this house, as he cannot go away from you, because you know I suppose, or probably you do not know, that when a royal Prince is in a house, the host places that house at the Prince's disposal."

"I don't see how I could know any of those things, but what I do know is, your Prince has asked me to marry him, and as I love him, I have consented. I am his fiancée, and I have a right to be with him."

"Of course, if you take that view there is no more to be said. Later, perhaps, you will be persuaded to listen to reason."

"My father is always telling me to listen to reason," I said. "It generally means listen to something worldly."

"Worldly," said he with a slight sneer, "I do not think you should accuse your father of being worldly."

"What do you mean, Captain Stuart?"

"The greatest possible worldly construction must be put on your present behavior. If you really were as unworldly as you pretend to be, you would leave the house, and so avoid all further trouble.

Do this by returning to your parents in London."

"You have no right to say these things to me."

I got up.

"I consider you are exceeding your duty to the Prince. I think you hate me."

"I do not hate you, I do not know you, and it is not for you and I to quarrel, we are discussing a purely business matter."

"I'm glad Prince Antony doesn't like you," I said rather cruelly, "you may have a row of nice ancestors, but you seem to me very ungentle in your manners, and at any rate you are lacking in tact."

"This is not a moment for tact, this is a moment for fact."

"You have no sympathy, you are like a stone figure without a heart, I shall not stay in the room with you. You make even the fire seem cold."

I went out of the room to the library. Meg was sitting on a stool by the fire at Stranmore's feet. The lamp shone on them both, his face looked grave. He held out his hand as I came in.

"My dear," he said, "Meg has told me; I did not suspect such a thing."

I sat down on the leather couch.

"That horrible man has been calling me worldly, and says I'm running after Antony because he is a Prince."

"That was unnecessary," said Stranmore, "I

should not have thought a man of his position would be rude to a lady; I am sorry."

"Never mind what he says, darling, he is furious because Antony does not like him, amongst other things."

"At the same time, my dear Elizabeth," said Stranmore, "the situation is a very delicate one. I shall have to know more, before I can possibly advise you. I can only point out, that though Prince Antony is only related distantly to the Royal family, he would not be allowed to marry a commoner."

"He says he will marry me," I said in a low voice.

"Then I'm afraid we're all going to have a great deal of trouble, my dears," said Stranmore.

"Can't they make exceptions?" said Meg, "surely one wouldn't matter."

"I'm afraid not," he said, shaking his head, "unless —"

"Yes," I said eagerly, "yes, what?"

"I was going to say, I read of a case the other day, I believe it happened a little while ago abroad, a Prince of the blood gave up his titles and position, and married the lady of his choice."

"Then there is hope," said Meg excitedly, "a little streak of light showing through the curtains."

Stranmore got up and walked about the room.

"Such a problem has never been presented to me,

I must consult someone who knows more about it than I do."

He stopped and looked down on me.

"Has this been going on for long?"

"Three weeks."

"Tell him all about it," said Meg.

And I told him from the beginning, the chain of circumstances which had led up to my meeting Antony.

"It is an extraordinary story," he said, "he seems to be meant for you, but unfortunately, romantic as it may seem, the only side we are allowed to consider is the practical side. I feel sure you ought to weigh things very carefully, and if you can, I think you should try to forget him."

"That is impossible."

"Don't say that," said Meg, "something may be arranged, one never knows. Nothing can be done for the present and the future can take care of itself. I think you had better go up to bed. I'll let you know when the doctor and nurse arrive. I shall put on a dressing gown, and lie on the couch in my room."

"Very well," I said, and left them — I lay on my bed watching the firelight dance on the ceiling, trying to read but unable to, and after a long, long interval, I must have dozed a little for I woke with a start, hearing the sound of a motor outside. I

peeped out, and saw a nurse and evidently the doctor pass along the side of the big stairway, and presently Meg came in.

"Well?" I said.

"The London doctor says Antony is not so very bad, but he does not seem to understand why, if the gun went off accidentally, he was not much more severely injured. He seems to think he is all right, but must be kept quiet as the wound is rather near the lung."

I started up. "He won't die?" I said.

"No, no," said Meg, "only I hope he doesn't suspect anything about how it happened. He seems a very nice old man, the nurse is elderly, too, and looks rather a dear. He brought a letter for Captain Stuart from Prince George, and one for Stranmore. I read that one, and it is thanking Stranmore for his kindness to Antony, and saying he would come down early to-morrow by motor."

"Oh, dear, then there will be a scene," I said.

"There can't be a scene when Antony's so ill," said Meg. "Come, be sensible. When he's better, though," she added, "I expect there'll be a bit of a fuss."

A knock at the door interrupted us, and Rose, Diana's old maid, came in with some biscuits and a decanter of sherry.

"I thought we might have a little orgy after our

troubles," said Meg, and poured out two glasses. "Now drink this, he is in no danger, and you may as well get some sleep. We'd better go to bed now, I'm most awfully sleepy."

"It is like one of the Knights of the Round Table, isn't it, Meg?"

"It's very unlike the Knights of to-day," said Meg, "they only get knighted because they make rather better jam or soap than other people. Good-night, don't worry."

She closed the door softly. I slept fitfully, and kept starting up, and sleeping again, until the morning.

The next day, the doctor and nurse had orders from Captain Stuart, that I was not to see Antony, but he asked for me so persistently, that at last I went in, just before luncheon. He looked flushed, his eyes were very bright.

"I can't bear being watched over all the time," he said, "come and sit down, Perdita. You are a vision of beauty."

"I may only stay five minutes," I said.

"I shan't let you go. I hate middle-aged people. They're all prosaic and ordinary. None of them ever seem to have been young. Very few of them are sympathetic. Well," he lowered his voice as a nurse was sitting in the adjoining room, "we've done something towards the end."

"We have," I said, "your father's coming down to-day."

"So much the better. I have one or two things to tell him."

"Will it be any use, all this?"

"Don't you like to see me, Perdita? Don't you love me?"

"You know I do."

"Then it is well worth it, isn't it?" He kissed my hand.

"Oh, do be careful, the nurse will see."

"What if she does, we're engaged."

"Are we?" I sighed.

"I'll kiss you in a minute, if you're not more cheerful, and compromise you forever. I'm so thirsty, give me some of that soda and milk, there's a darling."

The nurse, hearing the syphon, came in. "Can I do anything?" she said.

"No, thank you," said Antony, "I'm being well looked after." He smiled, and the nurse smiled, too.

"Very well, Your Highness," she said, and went back into the other room.

"Barbed wire entanglements," muttered Antony, "barricades."

I put the glass down for him.

"Are you sure you feel all right?" I asked

anxiously, noticing his flushed face and restless eyes.

"I'm a bit hot, you know."

The doctor came in.

"You must go away now, Miss Sutherland," he said.

"I shan't let her go unless I can have her back when I want her," said Antony in rather an excited way, holding on to my hand.

"That's all right," said Sir William soothingly, "she shall come again, but you must have a rest now and perhaps you could take a little luncheon."

"I don't want to eat anything," said Antony peevishly, "I'm not hungry."

"Au revoir," I said as I went to the door, "I'm coming again soon."

"Don't you let them keep you out of here," he called after me.

"She shall come when you ask for her," said Sir William. Just as I went out, I heard him say to the nurse, "I should like you to take His Highness' temperature."

At three o'clock, Prince George of Basle arrived, accompanied by Colonel Veraker. He was a big broad shouldered man, very upright, with a gray beard, gray hair, beetling black brows, and piercing black eyes, which looked from under them rather fiercely. He went up to Antony's room immediately he arrived, accompanied by Stranmore, and re-

mained there for some time. At four-thirty, tea was served in the big drawing-room, and he came downstairs with his gentleman, and took tea with us. Colonel Veraker was very unlike Captain Stuart. He had a very pleasing voice, and agreeable smile, and his manners were courteous and charming. After tea the Prince asked me to come and talk to him, and show him the pictures. As we walked down the long gallery, he paused before one of the pictures of a very beautiful Lady Stranmore and, instead of looking at it, looked down on me from his great height.

"My son has told me he is in love with you."

"Yes, sir," I said.

"He shows very good taste, but alas, my son is too young to marry, and, also we have other plans for him."

"Did you tell him that, sir?" I asked.

"I did."

"Is it impertinent to ask you what he said?"

He waived the question.

"The boy is ill now, I shall not take much notice of what he says."

"I didn't know he was a Prince, I cannot help loving him."

"Youth soon forgets," said the Prince, and believed what he said.

"I shall not forget."

"Then you will probably have a very unhappy life, because you would not be allowed to marry him."

"I will not marry anyone else."

"I regret to hurt your feelings. I'm sorry you ever met my son, but I am sure you will believe me when I tell you, this thing cannot be. It is final."

I bent my head.

"We need not discuss it further, then," I said. "Have I your permission to retire?"

He bowed and smiled a little.

"It is getting very dark. Am I to be left alone in this ghostly gallery?"

I looked at him. "You do not believe in spirits or ghosts, Prince," I said, "only romantic people do that."

I made a bob and left him to find his way back to the salon.

The Prince decided to stay until the following day, and I heard to my great joy, that when he returned, Captain Stuart would return with him and Colonel Veraker would stay with Antony.

Our love had now emerged from its first mystic, and shadowy beauty, and become a matter of common discussion, a theme for controversy and a cause of disturbance. I felt, if I had been the heroine of a play, I should then and there have left the house, and sacrificed myself to save future trouble, but I

knew that his life and mine were so closely entwined, he would die if I went away. He was meant for me from all time — I could not separate myself from him any more than I could, in cold blood, cut off my right hand, yet I hated this wonderful precious gift of love being dragged into the glaring light of parental discussion. It was like uncovering a sacred relic to an unbeliever.

"Why did you leave Prince George in the picture gallery, darling. It wasn't very polite."

"He doesn't like me, he disapproved of me, he won't help me. It will certainly make no difference to my future, so why should I trouble about him?"

"Of course you are dreadfully worried and I'm so sorry, only you shouldn't have done that. He didn't really mind. He laughed, and told Stranmore you were very unused to Court manners."

"And I'm not likely to have an opportunity of getting more used to them," I said, "so that's that, and I would rather have dinner in my room than meet all those heartless old people again."

"Very well, dear, I'll send it up, and come and sit with you after."

I sat in front of the fire, a prey to the most melancholy thoughts, and I remembered Meg's words of a few days back, "it's almost quieter not being in love."

About ten o'clock Meg came in. She looked

rather disturbed. "Antony has a rather high temperature," she said, "and Sir William is anxious for you to go in. He does nothing but call for you."

I got up quickly and put on my dressing gown.

"Oh, Meg, is he very bad?"

"I don't know, I don't see how he could be. Dr. Newton said the wound was quite a clean one. Perhaps if he sees you he will rest. They can't get him to do anything, he calls and calls for you all the time."

My heart was beating fearfully as we went along the corridor.

"Could a man die of a wound like that?"

Sir William was sitting by the bed, and the nurse standing near.

"Where is Perdita, can't you find her, have they sent her away?" His voice was weak, he turned his head from side to side.

"No, no, we have sent for her."

"You say that — but she doesn't come."

"Antony," I said, "Antony."

Sir William rose and motioned me to sit down in his chair.

"Where have you been, why didn't you come, my Perdita? I must have you near me."

I sat down and took his hand in mine.

Sir William moved away, beckoning the nurse to follow.

"I'm glad I did it," whispered Antony feverishly, "they can't separate us now, can they?"

"No, no, they cannot."

"I fixed it very well, didn't I? Poor old George, he's awfully cut up."

"We are all upset, Antony."

"I keep on imagining I am in the train, on my way to Paris, going farther and farther away from you."

"You are not in the train, you are with me at Stranmore, where we first met. Now try to sleep, and I'll stay with you."

He closed his eyes.

"I'm so hot, it's a bit painful this thing, hurts when I breathe a bit, you know."

I felt dreadfully uneasy, his hand was so hot and clutched at mine now and then convulsively. I sat very still, the light was dim. The nurse had put a little kettle on the fire, where it sang in a homely way, and the clock on the mantelpiece ticked slowly. I heard the doctor and nurse whispering together in the adjoining room. Now and then Antony started and opened his eyes.

"Don't let them take you away," he said.

"No, I will stay."

"They'll do it if they can — I know them."

"I won't let them."

"I only feel at peace when you are here."

He lay back again on his pillows. A spot of crimson burnt in his cheeks. His eyes looked a little sunken, his bright hair disordered with his restless turnings. An hour passed. He seemed to sleep. I noticed his breathing was rather difficult. I disengaged my hand from his, and got up. The chair creaked a little, I stood still, fearful lest it should disturb him, but he did not move. I went into the other room, where his father, the doctor, and nurse were sitting. The doctor offered me his chair, and the nurse took up her vigil in Antony's room.

"He is asleep," I said, "but his breathing sounds heavy, difficult."

"I'm afraid that may be," said Sir William.

"Why?" I said nervously. "Is there any reason?"

"I'm sorry to say the right lung is slightly affected."

I felt myself go pale. "Is it dangerous?"

"It is sufficiently serious."

The Prince of Basle looked at me.

"It is sufficiently serious for me to allow you to go to him," he said.

I turned away with a sob. So this was the end of it all, only a few weeks, and then perhaps the longest of all separations.

"You need not fear," said Sir William, "I have every hope that we shall pull His Highness through."

Colonel Veraker came in softly.

"I have telephoned for another nurse," he said, "she will arrive by the first train to-morrow morning. How is he?"

"His temperature is going up, but he is sleeping now."

"I think your Royal Highness, indeed, everyone, ought to take a little rest, we cannot do any more at present, we may want you here a good deal to-morrow, Miss Sutherland, so you must get all the sleep you can to-night."

"Very well, I will leave my door open, and nurse can fetch me. Good-night, sir," I said to Antony's father.

Colonel Veraker followed me out.

"Please forgive me," he said in a rather hesitating way, "but I am so sorry about it all. I think I understand."

I looked at him quickly.

"I am your friend," he said. "I have known the boy since he was a baby. Anything I can do to contribute to his happiness, I will do."

I put my hand in his. My eyes were full of tears. I could hardly speak.

"You are kind," I finally said.

I left him looking after me with a sympathetic expression on his face.

Meg was sitting in the arm chair in my room. I

shut the door and sat down on the chintz covered couch.

"I waited for you," she said, "I couldn't sleep. There were so many people in the room, I came away. What is the latest?"

"He is very ill, they let me go in because of that. Meg, is this the end of everything?"

"I don't know."

"I had rather he was alive, even though we were separated. Oh Meg, what shall I do if he dies?"

"I don't believe he will die," said Meg, stoutly, "God will preserve him for you. He must adore to see two people really and truly in love, the way he meant people to love."

"Just as I came out of Antony's room, Colonel Veraker followed me out, and told me he was my friend. He is a good man and would help us if he could."

"It is something to have a friend at Court," said Meg, "isn't it?"

"I suppose so — Don't you hate nights, they are so long, and dark, and full of forebodings, and queer noises you don't hear in the day."

"That's because you're unhappy, everything is exaggerated. Come, lie down on your bed."

"I'd rather stay here. If I go to bed I shall think, and think, and think."

"Very well, I'll stay with you. You won't be so

lonely, then. I'll put this over you. Try to sleep."

She took the eiderdown off the bed and covered me with it.

"I'll sit in this chair by the fire."

"There's a rug in the bottom drawer of the wardrobe, put it over your feet."

She found it, and tucking herself up lay back on the cushions.

Presently I heard her breathing softly and regularly, and knew she was asleep, but I did not sleep. The red glow of the fire grew dim on the ceiling, now and then an ember dropped on the hearth, with a little soft thud. I saw the thread of light pencilled between the curtains — I heard the chirp of a bird, the soft rustle of the wind of dawn. . . .

And the next day Antony was worse. Another doctor was sent for from London. His father became different, there was a hush over the house, everyone went about with a grave face. As for me I felt as if the whole world was slipping away. People moved about me like shadows. Meg kept with me, but even she seemed different. I heard her speak, and answered her, but I did not feel anything. It was as if a sort of veil had come between me and other people. All I saw was Antony lying in bed, breathing with difficulty, his eyes shut, asking for me now and then in a weak hoarse voice and muttering words about parting. "I will not go to Paris," he

said wildly as I sat by his side, "they shall not separate us." All through the long day I sat with him, for he would not be comforted without me. Towards evening, he seemed a trifle easier. He asked for his father, who came in and leant over him.

"Are you a little easier, my son?" he said gently, all his stiff manner gone.

Antony spoke with some difficulty.

"I may die, isn't it so?" he asked.

"No, no, do not speak of that."

"But it is so, let us be honest. I must tell you something."

"Do not exert yourself to tell me, for I understand all."

"You do not understand quite all. I shot myself."

"What do you mean?"

"I shot myself for love of Elizabeth. I could not bear to be taken from her. You were sending me away."

"This is dreadful for me to hear."

"I am madly in love with Elizabeth. I do not care to live without her, therefore I must die; it is far better for me to die than to be separated from her."

"Oh, my son, how could you do such a thing! Could we not have discussed . . ."

"I was being sent to Paris, I should not perhaps have seen you. I want to marry Elizabeth Sutherland."

"Do not ask that."

"I want to marry her. If I am finished does it matter?"

"How can I refuse you anything. You have me at a terrible disadvantage" said his father in a low voice.

Antony went on in an exhausted way. "I must make her my wife, I must fulfill my destiny, and hers. If I live, God is on our side, if I die it will save trouble for everyone."

"As you wish, Antony."

Then I knew he was dying, for only death could have been the High Priest of such a marriage in the eyes of Antony's father. He came into the other room to us all.

"Colonel Veraker, my son desires to marry this lady, send for a priest."

Colonel Veraker bowed and went out of the room.

"Go back to my son," said Prince George, "he needs you."

I went softly back, and took up my place by his side. I laid my head against his hand, so that he would not see my face.

When night fell over the moorland, I was mar-

ried to Antony. I shall never forget that strange ceremony. He had made me set up an altar near his bed, a table with a white lace cloth — George carried the silver crucifix from the chapel, and we put it on this table; on either side were silver candlesticks, in front a bowl of white gardenias from the hot house. He wanted me to wear white, and I put on a white dress, and a white lace veil, belonging to one of the Ladies Stranmore — He had a fancy for me to wear it — The light from the tall candles illumined the room, no other light except the fire. Stranmore's chaplain officiated. Prince George, Meg, Stranmore, Colonel Veraker and Captain Stuart stood 'round the bed. In the background stood the doctors and nurses, and poor George, his head bent, his eyes on the ground. The scent of the gardenias was like incense. I saw the face of my lover and I saw nothing else. I heard the voice of the chaplain, solemn, slow, speaking those powerful, awful words, words which bind two human beings together for all time; exquisite in the ears of lovers, dreadful in the ears of those who do not love.

"Will thou, Antony George John . . . take Elizabeth Mary . . . to have and to hold in sickness and in health, for richer for poorer . . . and keep thee only unto her as long as ye both shall live."

I heard one of the nurses give a stifled sob, and quite suddenly in a flash, the words stabbed me to the heart. "As long as ye both shall live"—how long would he live? I remember saying, "I will" and then a blackness. Meg sprang forward. . . .

CHAPTER XII

"AND THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER"

Then a miracle happened; for, as our Lord was once present at a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and turned the water into wine, so He was surely present at our wedding, and touching the water of life, which was fast ebbing away, he turned it into the rich red wine of life and Antony lived—

"I told you God likes a love story," said Meg.

. . . . . .

Antony grew stronger day by day and as he grew stronger so did his father find himself in a very awkward predicament. Though he rejoiced in his son's return to health and strength, he knew he was returning, not only to health and strength, but to a wife, and to all the difficulties and pitfalls of a worldly disadvantage. About a fortnight after the wedding Colonel Veraker sat in the library talking to Meg, Stranmore and me.

"Here," he said, "we have on our hands, not only a Prince returning to life, but a perfectly sound, healthy and charming Princess as well."

He twinkled his eyes and nodded at me.

"That is the situation."

"What is to be done," said Stranmore, "what do you suggest?"

"There are two courses open," said Colonel Veraker, "one is for Prince George to strike out a line of his own, and permit his son, after certain undertakings of course, to marry a commoner. After all, these are democratic days."

"And the other?" asked Stranmore.

"The other is, for Prince Antony himself, to give up his title and position, become an ordinary country gentleman, and live happily ever afterwards."

"That would be the best of all," I said.

"You see the marriage, as it stands, could be annulled," said Colonel Veraker.

"Could it?" I said fearfully.

"Yes," said Stranmore, "I am afraid that is true."

"Then it will be annulled," I said with conviction.

"I am not so sure," said Colonel Veraker, "for we still have a very obstinate youth to deal with, who might shoot us all next time."

We all laughed.

"Princes cannot go against ancient customs, and important personages; they cannot overthrow all the rules of their order, but I think, as a form of marriage has been gone through, we might have a conference, at which important personages would

be present, and see whether we cannot conform to the rules in a certain measure, and make two people happy at the same time."

Meg smiled at him. "It's a pretty compliment," she said.

"To come back to earth, and our father, what do you advise?'

"I think I will write a little note, and say I wish to see him," said Stranmore. "I could talk to him, and there need not be a long explanatory group of letters, which might get left about."

"That would be the best way," said Colonel Veraker, "I will leave it to your tact, and diplomacy, to explain about the form of marriage which took place, and perhaps you will suggest to him, it might injure his daughter's reputation, and prejudice her position with important people, if anything got about. I feel sure, Prince George will approve of your going in person," and so it was settled.

Two days later Stranmore went to London.

Antony was allowed to sit up in his room, and I had tea with him, while the nurse went for a walk. The sun poured in on us, the sky was red. Outside the wind rushed past in strong gusts, and shook the fir trees down the hill. Antony sat propped up with pillows, looking pale, but happy.

"We're married," he said.

"Sort of," said I.

"Quite utterly, irretrievably." He smiled.

"Sugar?" I asked, making his tea.

"Two lumps."

"Cream?"

"Lots."

"A kiss?" I said, handing him his cup.

"Please. Two or three, or —"

"One at a time. Nobody would have dreamed of this, would they?" I said.

"I often dreamed of it."

"Do you know that dad is being told about us this very minute, and I believe he will puff himself out so huge, that he will burst, like that frog."

"What's he like?" asked Antony, curiously.

"Not a bit like us," I said, "awfully pompous, and rather religious."

"Religious?"

"Yes, not good you know, but religious."

"I know."

"And very quick at making use of people, and very generous and hospitable, and very good at talking hind legs off donkeys, in fact, a great orator — He had ideals once, but nobody believed in them, and at last he didn't himself. Just like — let me think — Suppose I saw a star, far up in the sky, and thousands of people came and stood near me, looking up, too, and I told them to look at that

wonderful star, and everyone said, 'There isn't a star.' It would be rather difficult to believe there was. That's how it is with ideals."

"I have seen a star."

"We have both seen it, not only a star, but the sun and the moon, and all the glory of the heavens, and the beauty of the earth, like in the Psalm, do you remember, 'Oh, all ye works of the Lord, Bless ye the Lord, Praise Him and magnify Him forever.'"

"I love your mind, Perdita. I like to bathe my soul in the refreshing streams of your thoughts."

"My thoughts are sheep," I said, and told him how I first came to call them that a long time ago.

"We will join our flock together, Perdita, and shepherd them into a peaceful glade."

"Antony, don't you think people are very unobservant? About your accident, I mean."

"They were rather dense. I am glad. I wonder what the doctors thought."

"You never know what doctors who attend to princes think. They aren't supposed to think at all. Nobody who waits on princes is supposed to think——on their own account."

"That's why I don't care about being a prince."

"There's a great glamor," I said, "pomp and circumstance. There's a certain something which appeals to my artistic mind."

"You are really a princess, now."

"Just for a minute or two."

"My Princess for always — And your crown is not of perishable metal, but of the everlasting roses of love."

"Kiss me, Perdita!"

Downstairs, Colonel Veraker was playing "Chanson Triste," the soft melody floated up — we listened hand in hand, in the dying light.

"I hope we shall love each other like this when we are old."

"That would be real romance," I whispered. Antony kissed my hand and held it against his cheek.

"God keep us in love, more and more, as the years pass . . ."

. . . . . .

The following day I had a letter, registered and sealed like some document of state.

My dearest Child:

Your mother is overwhelmed — I am overwhelmed! What strange Fate led you to meet a Prince. What a very difficult position you are in at present. Should you, like Lady Jane Grey, be only a nine days Queen, it will be more than a nine days wonder. I shall, of course, as I promised Lord Stranmore, be dumb, but I am ready to do anything to help, and if by my complete silence and obedience, to the commands of those in a higher position than mine, I can render the best service, I gladly obey.

But, oh, my very dear daughter, at last a devoted

father's efforts are rewarded. I am too overcome to write more. Your mother is radiant as a young gazelle. It is the proudest moment of our lives.

Your devoted

FATHER.

I tried to remember what efforts my father had made to give us opportunities for greatness, which seemed to have so exhausted him. He had forgotten us so often, he had certainly made himself extremely breathless, when arguing with me and trying to make me marry Sydney Jarrette — a marriage which would have been disastrous for me, and would have meant, either a life of virtuous wretchedness, or sinful deception; for it is certain that people who marry in that way, are sure to run into that sort of danger. If they are not sticks and stones, if they are flesh and blood, if they have hearts, some day they will have to make an almost impossible sacrifice, and renounce their right to live, or they will take the right, and counting the world as nothing, go down into the dust. I folded the letter and put it in my pocket. . . .

Many things happened in the month that followed my marriage to Prince Antony of Basle. There were consultations, family meetings, grave gatherings of important personages to decide our future. Plans to annul the marriage, of all sorts, which Antony fought stoutly — We returned to

London, Antony to the house of his father. We grew weary of the separation, and at last, one day in December, a week before Christmas, came the final gathering at the house of the Prince. I drove with Stranmore and Meg, and when we drew up at the door, a carriage with the Royal Arms already stood there. Antony received us in an ante-room. I drew near to him.

"Was that the King's carriage?" I whispered. "I feel frightened. Kings can do anything, can't they? Look at Henry the Eighth, and Charles II."

"Look at Charles I," said Antony. "He lost his head, whilst I have only lost my heart."

We were ushered by a solemn major-domo, into a lofty room furnished with rich, heavy furniture, enormous pictures and magnificent brocaded curtains — There was a long table at the end of the room, and several gentlemen near it. The Prince of Basle stood talking to another, a bearded man with eyeglasses — Colonel Veraker and Captain Stuart were also in attendance.

"It's the King's brother," whispered Antony. "He's not a bad sort." He advanced. The Prince saw us, and came forward.

"May I present to Your Royal Highness, Miss Elizabeth Sutherland."

I went forward and curtsied. The Prince put out his hand. I went nearer, took it, and curtsied again.

"You have caused many heartburnings, madam," he said, a little grimly, but I saw a faint smile in his rather kind eyes. He shook hands with Stranmore, and spoke to him for a few minutes, then walked over to the table. "Let us all sit down," he said, taking his place in a huge carved chair. "We must get to business, for I have another appointment."

We all gathered around the Bühl table, and as it was rather dark outside, the electric light was turned on. A cuckatoo in a large gilt cage near the window, kept cracking nuts, and dropping the shells on the floor of the cage with a little click, a tiny Pekinese dog lay snoring on a yellow satin cushion near the fire — A clock ticked slowly and solemnly on the marble mantelpiece — These small noises obtruded themselves in a queer way, at this important moment. When Prince James, the King's brother, spoke, everyone listened attentively — There was a tense feeling in the air — Only the little dog kept on snoring.

"We meet to-day to discuss a situation which has seldom, if ever, arisen in this country. A situation which, as a rule, can have only one result. It has often happened abroad, I believe, that a Prince has fallen in love with a subject, a lady not of his own rank, and for many State reasons, he has been obliged to forego his claim on his family for the

future, and give up his title of Prince, and live as an ordinary gentleman. He may be created a Peer through the generosity of the King, and he may retain the half of his income, but that is entirely a matter for arrangement. *That* is what happens in other countries, and that, in sum, is what we have to discuss to-day." Antony looked at me and smiled. The Prince continued: "Circumstances which you all know of, made it possible, some weeks ago for a form of marriage to take place between this lady and our cousin, Prince Antony. We cannot but rejoice that though at the time of his marriage he was in grave danger of death, he has now recovered, but we must deplore that it has put us all into a very awkward position, that such a marriage was hurried into, even at that critical moment. To-day, after great thought and many grave consultations, the King has issued his commands, and I am the bearer of this message." He turned to one of the gentlemen. "Lord Arthur, you have the document," and Lord Arthur handed him a long paper. "This is the message."

We have to-day decided at the request of our Well-Beloved Cousin, Prince George of Basle, and his family, that Prince Antony George James, his son, having contracted an alliance with Elizabeth Sutherland, shall if he desire to do so, marry the said Elizabeth Sutherland, but that if he so does, he shall renounce his title of Prince, and become an ordinary gentleman. He shall renounce

his relationship with the Royal Family, and all claims upon it. He shall take the name of James Antony, and his wife shall be Mrs. Antony. He may retain the half of his income, in order to live in comfort and keep her, suitably — Or, he shall, if he desires it, annul his marriage, and retain his title, and all the appurtenances thereof. Should he decide to renounce all, he must in the presence of his father, sign the document of renunciation.

He held up a paper with a long seal attached. "This is the document," he said. "You have His Majesty's permission to choose what you will do." It was a dramatic moment.

He sat down, a murmur went 'round the circle. Antony got up, his eyes shining, his eager face turned towards the Prince.

"I renounce forever my title and claims, and choose to marry the woman I love. The choice is not difficult. All my life I have hated the publicity of my position. I gladly give up that which I have always hated, for that which I have desired — a happy marriage to the woman of my choice."

"Marriage is a very serious affair," said the King's brother, gravely. "It is not an affair of weeks, or months, it is for life. Perhaps the lady would like to speak. It is only fair to hear her side of the question."

I felt myself getting hot, but I spoke up all the same.

"I am glad for one thing that Prince Antony should give up his title, because it cannot then be said I tried to gain a big name, or that I am a worldly and ambitious person — But I am sorry I may not be called princess, because I think it is a beautiful name, and like a fairy tale."

The prince smoothed his moustache and smiled a little. "You are a very romantic young lady," he said.

"It is good to be romantic — People are often unhappy in their homes, and their lives dull, and monotonous, because they only see the dust on their chairs, and never the sunlight out of their windows."

"You are a pair of children," said the Prince. "Remember, my dear Antony, you are giving up a great heritage, a great name."

"I am starting a new name."

"You are losing a great deal of this world's goods."

"I am gaining my soul."

"You were always too much of an idealist."

"Never so much as to-day."

"I urge you strongly to separate, you two young people, for you do not really know each other very well — you may be, not only unsuited in position, but also unsuited in many other ways — temperament, disposition."

"I will take the risk," said Anthony decidedly.

"Well," said the Prince, shrugging his shoulders, "had you lived twenty years ago, this decision could never have been arrived at, but we live in a democratic age, and the old order has changed. I have no more to say — Colonel Veraker — the paper — Antony, sign this, and go in peace." Antony looked at me, and I suddenly felt what a responsibility lay on me.

"Don't do it unless you are sure," I said. "It will be awful for me, for us both — if you ever regret it."

"I shall not regret it, ever," and he went over to the other side of the table, and in the presence of those grave men, put his name to the document which destroyed his Princedom. Then bowing to me, he said: "Mrs. Antony, your very humble servant."

The Prince shook him by the hand. "I like a sport," he said. "Antony, you're better than a Prince; you're a great gentleman — And you shall both come to Inverstrae House in the autumn," and calling me to him, he said, "You have a great chance in life — a chance to be happy. See that you make the most of it. Now, good-bye, I am already late for my appointment."

He shook hands with us all, and followed by his gentlemen, went out of the room. Colonel Veraker

came up and shook hands; we all talked at once.

"Shall we have to be married again?" I asked presently.

"Of course," said Antony. "You married a Prince. He is dead, you are a widow, and Mr. Antony has proposed."

"Your Prince will never die," said Colonel Veraker. "He lives for ever, the Prince of your dreams. It is a charming end to a charming story."

"Come, Elizabeth," said Stranmore, "Meg is waiting for us, and anxious to know what has happened."

"We will dine to-night," he whispered, as he moved towards the door, "and arrange about our real wedding." . . .

"I thought they would put you in prison, or chop off your head, Elizabeth," said Meg that night, as we sat over the dying fire in Belgrave Square. We had had a very strenuous evening indeed. Dad and mother had been to dinner, and he had preserved his calm during the meal, but afterwards he talked in his flowriest strain — He had blessed us both. "Never," he said, "had he experienced a moment's anxiety as to our sense of duty to himself. We had covered him with a coronal of fame; we had been sensible and settled ourselves in life more magnificently than he could have hoped in his wildest moments of conjecture. He was now prepared to

hand us over to our husbands, and quit the world with a quiet and peaceful mind. He regretted to tell us, owing to a little misunderstanding with regard to some founders' shares and debentures, that he was not quite so well off as he had hoped to be. He had a few hundred a year, and would certainly, in course of time, make those hundreds into thousands, if not millions. He had done it before, and he would do it again. He wished us a very good-night. He was not one to intrude upon our bliss. When we wanted him, we knew where to find him — At least, he would let us know where to find him. He was proud; he was elated; he was overcome; he was bewildered. . . .

Mother was sweet about it all. She was quite happy and comfortable with dad at present, but she thought she had better get her feet on more solid ground, with Meg and me.

"There's a little suite in the west wing at Stranmore," said Meg, "and a niche at Belgrave Square, which you must consider your own, when dad's financial position becomes again lost in a cloud of mystery."

"As it certainly will," said mother, "he is so too," said Meg, "and he's always been a little too hopeful about railways in Nebraska."

"He's had a way of making other people hopeful, bright and cheery, on other people's money."

"Whatever we do," said mother, "we must be careful of him just now. He said the other day he was quite sure there was coal on your property, Meg."

"Yes," said Meg. "I felt sure he would be sure of that. I'm surprised he didn't think there was a gold mine there, though the only gold to be found on the Stranmore estate, is when I am walking about on it, and it's in my teeth. He can't very well prospect on that."

"He spoke of sending an expert down with Stranmore's permission," said mother.

"There is an expert already there," said Meg — "me — not a coal expert, but an expert judge of character."

Mother sighed. "Your father is a very clever man," she said, "if there is coal there —"

"Darling," said Meg, "you always believe in dad, you know, and that's where all your money's gone to."

"He believes in everything so thoroughly himself, he sweeps one along with him. Good-night, darlings, I feel so happy to think you are both settled."

"We are better than that," said Meg. "We are happy."

"It all seems to have come about so quickly; only a few months ago I didn't even know Antony."

"Very good and happy events and very tragic ones always happen quickly," said Meg. . . .

The following day the General came to tea and heard our tremendous news.

"I told you, you were an exceptional creature, and would have an exceptional fate," he said.

"Dear friend, you have always been my consolation in my trouble, and now I know you will rejoice with me in my joy."

"I do indeed, and I also have some good news. Michael is to be my adopted son. His mother decided she was too much of an invalid to bother with him."

"How can she neglect such a charming gift."

The General shrugged his shoulders. "Her lack of appreciation is my opportunity," he said. "Where will you go, my dear, you and your Prince without a kingdom?"

"We want to have a house in the country — the seaside country — where we can live our lives unobserved, tending the Shrine. All our lives we have been turning towards that little Shrine. Now we may burn the incense and strew the flowers together."

. . . . . .

Rumor was busy with Antony's name and mine; whenever we went out, people followed us. We were photographed wherever we went — in the

Park, at the theater — Little lines appeared in the Press — little verses were added to topical songs — letters poured in on us, questioning the truth, asking where I was, if I was married yet, if I was a Princess; and at last when everything had been officially settled, our second wedding took place, very quietly, very simply, just mother, dad, Meg, Stranmore, the General and Colonel Veraker. And we went away together, to beautiful Stranmore, which had been lent to us, where we had first met. Here, two lovers ate of the bread of content, and drank the wine of life, and lifted up their hearts in gratitude for the great blessings which had been bestowed. We stood upon the mountain of Joy and experienced the Divine Transfiguration of Love.

. . . . . .

When summer came again, Antony and I went down to Stapleton to see my sweet Diana. She had taken her first vows and longed to see us. We went in the morning when the sky was blue and the sun was hot — We rang the bell at the gate. A nun opened the wide door, and showed us into the shadowed hall, and through the cloisters out into the garden. There, amongst the lilies, whose perfume filled the air with sweetness, we found her, gray-clad, white-veiled. She opened her arms, I went to her, whilst Anthony stood, tall and fair, looking at us both.

"We have both found our Kingdom," she said, softly.

. . . . . .

I often remember my vision in the little chapel at Stranmore, when Diana played the organ long ago — the Two Gardens — Hers and mine. Hers, cloistered, remote, a place of prayer and meditation, and soft stillness of dawn, and solemn peal of Matin bell, where the nuns walked by twos, and threes, their gray robes sweeping the earth.

Calm, sad, secure behind high convent walls
These watch the sacred lamp; these watch and pray,
And it is one with them when evening falls,
And one with them, the cool return of day.

And my garden; a place bathed in perfume, a place of flowers and singing birds, and the glory of the sunset, where a man and woman walk together, looking out over the sea, the ecstasy of a great passion wrapping them as in a garment, and presently, hand in hand, they turn, and go into the house. Night trails her robes of blue and silver across the grass, one by one the lights of the little house go out. The moon rises over the sea, a little wind stirs the trees, and on a branch a nightingale sings.

. . . . . .

I often lead the flock of my thoughts back through the pasture lands of memory, to the house of my

childhood in the green country. To Grosvenor Square with its rich comfort, I see Sister Eleanora by the Convent door, hidden by the cloud of white doves; the strange shabby room at Gloucester Place with its untidy servant, pealing bells and cracked looking-glass — the little world of girls at Baker Street — the Metropole with its constant stream of visitors — the repose and peace of gray Stranmore — the vortex of social ambition at Knightsbridge — the walks in Kensington Gardens — all these visions flit past me like a panorama. Who shall say how character is formed, by what strange mysterious means men and women become useful members of the community, or detrimentals. It is the Beginning which counts, when the mind is receptive, and easily impressed, and ready to accept Truth. It was a good thing for us in our early days to have the gift of observation, and to see the things which were valuable and the things which were worthless. Sister Eleanora was a beautiful type to influence any young mind. Her sweetness, her wisdom, her guiding hand pointing out purity, truth, and love, of everything which cannot be bought with money. Diana with her charm of manner, her courtesy to all, her care of others' feelings, her care of her own person, her sympathy and kindness. Children are told they have guardian angels; we also had our guardians, who, though we walked near the preci-

pice, put out their hands and drew us back to safety. We heard the rustle of wings and the exquisite voices of Heaven. Personalities, influences, guardian angels, whichever we call them, they were about us, to protect us, and guide us into the haven where we desired to be. We learnt how far apart from these was the personality of my father, with his habit of making use of everyone, the Montabellos, with their love of eating and drinking, and fine clothes, and their fear of being despised, unless they were well dressed. Bernard Chesham, Algernon Vernon, with their adoration for a title, no matter what man or woman held it, their desire to be seen at all big functions; their determined rush after money and pleasure; their awful lack of spirituality.

They listen for the tinkle of the bells
On Folly's cap as he goes flitting by.
And miss the grand sweet music of the sea
Whose whisp'ring waves run swiftly to the shore.

After seeking after place and power, thus they pass — the cortège of Death, the rushing fire engine, the ambulance with its burden of sickness — with unseeing eyes — they do not see the shining Figure walking in their midst, nor ask as St. Paul once did: "Quo vadis, Domine?"

We are not upon shifting sands; our feet are set

upon a rock. We are solid, stable, safe; no longer leaves in the wind of circumstance, but strong striplings growing and thriving, in time to become great trees with spreading branches, their heads towards Heaven, their roots firm in the good brown earth.

I lay down my pen; the book is finished. We stand together, our arms entwined, smiling and happy, waving farewell like Peter and Wendy, while the little fairies of Love and good Fortune jingle their joyous bells.

THE END

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